

Edited by
Siegfried Huigen, Jan L. de Jong
and Elmer Kolfin

The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks



Intersections

Interdisciplinary
Studies in Early
Modern Culture

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BRILL

The Dutch Trading Companies
as Knowledge Networks

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Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture

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Siegfried Huigen
Jan L. de Jong
Elmer Kolfin

NOTES ON THE EDITORS

SIEGFRIED HUIGEN is Associate Professor of Dutch Literature and Cultural History at the University of Stellenbosch, in South Africa. His research interests are early modern travel writing and the history of colonial science and scholarship. He is the author of *De weg naar Monomotapa* (1996) and *Knowledge and Colonialism; Eighteenth-century Travellers in South Africa* (2007 and 2009), and (co)editor of several books on South African politics of memory and colonial discourse. He is currently researching eighteenth-century Dutch representations of the 'East Indies'.

JAN L. DE JONG did his Ph.D. at Leiden University and now teaches Italian Renaissance art at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. He has published numerous articles on Italian painting and has a manuscript on papal propaganda in the Renaissance set for publication. He edited several volumes of *Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture*. His current research focuses on reports of visitors to Italy in the sixteenth century.

ELMER KOLFIN studied art history and modern western literature at the University of Utrecht. He got his Ph.D. in art history at Leiden University and currently teaches art history at the University of Amsterdam. He publishes mainly on seventeenth century Dutch painting, prints and book illustration. He has initiated and edited a volume on political prints of the Dutch stadtholders (2007) and co-edited the exhibition catalogue *Black is Beautiful. Rubens to Dumas*, on the representation of blacks in Dutch art.

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL ARBLASTER, a temporary part-time lecturer at the Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, is a self-employed translator and a historian of early-modern communication. He has a particular interest in print culture, exiles and diasporas, and representations of sanctity. He is the author of *A History of the Low Countries* (2006) and of *Antwerp & the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation* (2004).

HANS DEN BESTEN is associate professor of Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and professor extraordinary, Linguistics Dept., Stellenbosch University (South Africa). His areas of expertise are syntax and contact linguistics.

FRANS R.E. BLOM is assistant professor at the Department of Historische Nederlandse Letterkunde at the University of Amsterdam. His research interests are vernacular and Neo-Latin Literature of the Dutch Golden Age. He has published Constantijn Huygens' autobiography (*Mijn leven verteld aan mijn kinderen*), Huygens' travel diary *Journal van de reis naar Venetië*, and his architectural treatise *Domus*. Current research topics are early modern scholarly correspondence, especially of Caspar Barlaeus, mechanisms of self-presentation in seventeenth-century poetry, and literature of New Netherland.

BRITT DAMS studied Romance Languages and Comparative Literature in Ghent (Belgium) and Salvador (Brazil). She is preparing her dissertation at the Department of Dutch Literature at Ghent University. Her main field of interest is colonial history and literature. Her dissertation focuses on heterogeneous voices in Dutch Brazil (1624/30–1654).

ADRIEN DELMAS is currently preparing a Ph.D. in history at the Ecole des Hautes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris. His research deals with the different connections between written culture and European expansion in the seventeenth century. Together with Nigel Penn he is coordinating the edition of *Written Culture in a Colonial Context, 16th–19th centuries* (University of Cape Town).

ALETTE FLEISCHER is a graduate student of the history of science and technology at the Centre for Science, Technology, and Policy Studies, University of Twente, The Netherlands. She has a BA in cultural history and a MA in art history. Her research focuses on natural inquiry and invention and the creation of the seventeenth-century garden.

ANTJE FLÜCHTER studied history, political science, European ethnology and geography in Freiburg and Cologne. Since 1997 she has worked as assistant of Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, lecturer at the University of Münster. She did her Ph.D. in Münster in 2002, and since 2008 she has led a Junior Research Group in Heidelberg, which analyses cultural transfer as a factor in state building. Her research interests cover transcultural contact and transfer, state and confession in the Early Modern period and gender history.

CHRISTINA SKOTT is a graduate of the Sibelius Academy of Music, Helsinki, and also holds an MA in Art History from the University of Helsinki. She received her Doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 2004, with a dissertation on early modern European knowledge of Southeast Asia. She currently teaches European expansion at the University of Cambridge, where she is Director of Studies in History at Wolfson and Magdalene Colleges. Her research interests are in the history of colonialism in the Malay world, and eighteenth-century natural history and anthropology.

MICHIEL VAN GROESEN is Assistant Professor in Early Modern History at the University of Amsterdam. He specializes in Dutch representations of the Atlantic World in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 2008 he published *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634)*. In the same year, he started a project on Dutch representations of Brazil (ca. 1560–1720). For another project, *Contesting representations of New Netherland, 1652–1702*, he recently received a VENI-grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

HENK DE GROOT holds a Ph.D. from the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. His thesis concerns the study of the Dutch language in Japan during its period of national isolation (ca. 1641–1863). He is a senior lecturer in Japanese at the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology.

JULIE BERGER HOCHSTRASSER is Associate Professor of Early Modern Northern European Art at the University of Iowa. She is the author of *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (2007), and numerous articles in anthologies and exhibition catalogues on topics ranging from still life and landscape to the impact of Dutch visual culture throughout the world. For her current research project, “the Dutch in the World”, she has herself circled the globe to investigate art and visual culture in key sites of early modern Dutch trade in Asia, Africa, and the Americas – including Suriname.

GRÉGOIRE HOLTZ is an Assistant Professor in the French Department of the University of Toronto, and specializes in travel literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His dissertation is on *Pierre Bergeron et l'écriture du voyage à l'automne de la Renaissance*. He has co-edited *Voyager avec le diable, voyages réels, voyages imaginaires et discours démonologique, XV^e–XVII^e siècles* (with Thibaut Maus de Rolley; 2008), as well as ‘Parler librement.’ *La liberté de parole au tournant du XVI^e et du XVII^e siècle* (with Isabelle Moreau; 2005) and *Le voyage en Egypte de Pierre Belon, 1547* (2004).

ELSPETH JAJDELSKA is a lecturer in the department of English Studies at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow (UK). She is interested in the history of reading and its relationship to the history of literary form. She also has an interest in the interdisciplinary study of literature, using findings in linguistics and psychology to illuminate problems of literary history and criticism. She is the author of *Silent Reading and the Birth of the Narrator* (2007). She is now working on a book about verbal performance in the eighteenth century, provisionally titled *Rhetoric Dissolved*.

MARIA-THERESIA LEUKER is a Professor of Dutch Literature at the University of Cologne. Her research concentrates on the relations between literature and history, colonial and post-colonial literature, space in literature and the representation of national as well as religious and gender identities in literature. In 2000, she published *Künstler als Helden und Heilige. Nationale und konfessionelle Mythologie im Werk J. A. Alberdingk Thijms und seiner Zeitgenossen*. She is co-editor and co-author of the reference work *Niederländische Literaturgeschichte* (2006).

EDWIN VAN MEERKERK teaches cultural history and arts policy at the Radboud University Nijmegen. He wrote his dissertation on early eighteenth-century publishing in The Netherlands (University of Nijmegen, 2001). He has published a biography of William V of Orange and Wilhelmine of Prussia (2009), as well as various articles on other eighteenth-century subjects.

BRUNO NAARDEN is emeritus professor of Russian History of the University of Amsterdam. Most of his publications are in the field of the modern and contemporary history of Russia and Eastern Europe. He has published numerous articles on Nicolaas Witsen.

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INTRODUCTION

Siegfried Huigen

In 1638 the city fathers of Amsterdam received Maria de' Medici (1575–1642), the former queen of France. As part of her glorious entry, she was welcomed at the Oost-Indisch Huis (East India House), the local headquarters of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Here Maria de' Medici was given a taste of the overseas world which the VOC controlled. In the boardroom of the directors she could look at Chinese and Japanese paintings and views of the overseas territories of the VOC in Asia, hanging alongside weapons of conquered peoples. She was even given a taste of exotic foods and spices served on imported porcelain. According to Caspar Barlaeus, '[t]he eyes of Medici went astray; and she imagined herself to be a guest of Indians, Moluccans, Persians, Japanese and Chinese, when she saw this exotic and unusual banquet.' For her Amsterdam hosts the banquet was probably less exotic. They presented de' Medici with goods which were imported from the East Indies on a yearly basis.¹

For more than a century, from about 1600 until the early eighteenth century, the Dutch dominated world trade.² Via the Netherlands the far reaches of the world, both in the Atlantic and in the East, were connected. Dutch ships carried goods, but they also opened up opportunities for the exchange of knowledge. The commercial networks of the Dutch trading companies, i.e. the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, VOC) and West India Company (West-Indische Compagnie, WIC), provided an infrastructure which was accessible to people with a scholarly interest in the exotic world. In some cases, such as in the relationship between the VOC and the Japanese, this interest developed into an almost structural

¹ Caspar Barlaeus, in Dapper O., *Historische beschryving der stadt Amsterdam* [...] (Amsterdam, Jacob van Meurs: 1663) 656, 660–1 with the quotation on 660–661. Originally in Barlaeus C., *Blyde inkomst der alldoorluchtighste koninginne, Maria de Medicis, t'Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, Johan en Cornelis Blaeu: 1639). With thanks to Elmer Kolfin for this reference and comments on an earlier version of this Introduction.

² Israel J.I., *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585–1740* (Oxford: 1989).

exchange of knowledge on an exceptionally large scale. Via the Dutch trading post Deshima (1641–1859), an artificial island in the harbour of Nagasaki, employees of the VOC with an interest in the subject could collect information about Japan's geography, culture and medical practices, in particular acupuncture and moxibustion. At the same time Japanese scholars used Deshima as a window to Europe after the shoguns had closed Japan off from the rest of world (1635–1853).³ In various other places of the Dutch colonial world, both in the West and the East Indies, 'liefhebbers' (*virtuosi*; *amateurs*) collected specimens, made descriptions and drawings.⁴ Their 'immutable mobiles' were sent to Europe and became part of collections of curiosities or were further disseminated in print.⁵ They contributed substantially to the accumulation of European knowledge of the transoceanic worlds during the early modern period.

The present collection of essays brings together a number of case studies about knowledge construction which depended on the Dutch trading networks. The knowledge that is at issue in this volume has in most cases a descriptive quality. It belonged to the encyclopaedic field of knowledge production which followed the example of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*.⁶ Harold Cook's *Matters of Exchange* has recently pointed out that this kind of descriptive knowledge was no less important for the development of science during the time of the scientific revolution than the more abstract knowledge of physics and astronomy. *Matters of Exchange* also shows that researchers from the Dutch colonial world – many born outside the Republic – made important contributions to this field.

The essays in this volume complement Cook's argument. While *Matters of Exchange* is mainly concerned with knowledge in the fields

³ Blussé L. et al. (ed.), *Bridging the Divide: 400 years The Netherlands-Japan* (Leiden: 2000).

⁴ Cf. Cook H., *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: 2007) 72 for the Dutch 'liefhebbers'.

⁵ Latour B., *Science in Action. How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, MA.: 1987) 227.

⁶ Seifert A., *Cognitio historica. Die Geschichte als Namengeberin der frühneuzeitlichen Empirie*. (Berlin: 1976); Neuber W., "Zur Gattungspoetik des Reiseberichts. Skizze einer historischen Grundlegung im Horizont von Rhetorik und Topik." in: Brenner P.J. (ed.), *Der Reisebericht. Die Entwicklung einer Gattung in der deutschen Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: 1989) 50–69.

of natural history, medicine and geography, many essays in the current volume also address knowledge production in the orbit of the humanities. Moreover, the European reception of knowledge which was collected through the Dutch trade networks receives more attention in this volume. Current research usually overlooks the dissemination of knowledge in countries outside the Netherlands – with the exception of Japan – and treats scholars such as the German naturalist Georg Rumphius, who were born and raised in other European countries, as if they were more or less native Dutchmen. Future research should pay more attention to the European dimension, discerning in various countries different degrees of reception of knowledge generated with the assistance of the Dutch trading networks and taking the intellectual background of colonial scholars and scientists in countries outside the Netherlands into account.

The Dutch Trading Companies

To provide some context, a rough sketch of the history of the Dutch trading companies is necessary. Compared to other seafaring nations the Dutch were relative latecomers to the global trade. Their traditional trading partners were located on the European Atlantic coast and in the Baltic Sea region. By the late sixteenth century the Dutch started developing commercial activities in the tropics. The scale of these overseas pursuits was greatly enhanced by the establishment of joint-stock trading companies in the seventeenth century, the VOC (1602–1799) and WIC (1621–1792).

The VOC was established in 1602 to replace previous syndicates which were dissolved at the end of each voyage and re-established for each new voyage (the so-called pre-companies – ‘Voorcompagnieën’). The fleets of these earlier companies were in competition with each other. To be able to combat superior Portuguese forces in the East, the supreme governmental body in the Dutch Republic, the States General, compelled the stakeholders in the Asian trade to establish a new entity, the United East India Company. The companies which had previously been involved in trade with Asia were reorganized into ‘chambers’. The chambers appointed delegates for the general board of directors, who were called the ‘Heren XVII’ (Gentlemen XVII). The States General gave the VOC a mandate to act as a semi-independent arm of the Dutch Republic; east of the Cape of Good Hope it could

negotiate treaties, engage in warfare and act as an almost sovereign power,⁷ financing these activities with the profits from trade.

The first major success of the VOC in the East was the capture in 1605 of the Portuguese fort on Ambon, which also became the first step in acquiring a monopoly in the trade of spices. The same year the VOC started trading with the east coast (Coromandel) of the Indian subcontinent. Attempts to trade with the west coast (Malabar) faltered at first, but from 1616 the Mogul Empire allowed the VOC to start operations in Surat. Westward the VOC established itself from 1624 in Persia and in East Asia it opened a factory in Japan in 1609. From 1624 onwards Taiwan was gradually conquered, but in 1662 Taiwan was lost to a general of the Ming dynasty, Zheng Chenggong (1624–1662), alias Coxinga, who had opposed the rise of the Qing Dynasty and was forced to flee from the Chinese mainland. The loss of Taiwan was the biggest defeat suffered by the VOC during the seventeenth century.

In 1619 the VOC conquered Jakarta on Java and built Batavia on its ruins. Batavia, the ‘Queen of the East’, named after the homeland of the semi-mythical ancestors of the modern Dutch, the Germanic Batavians, became the seat of VOC administration in Asia after the example of Portuguese Goa. Further territories were conquered both on Java and on Ambon and between 1638 and 1658 the coastal regions of Ceylon were taken over from the Portuguese. With this, the VOC could lay its hands on the most important centre for the production of cinnamon. Subsequently, the VOC managed to acquire the monopoly in the trade of cloves, nutmeg and mace in eastern Indonesia after the conquest of Macassar during the period from 1666 to 1669.⁸

After the establishment of a settlement at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 the VOC covered an enormous area with a vast number of settlements, fortifications and trading posts from the Cape to Japan. Most of these settlements only housed a small number of Europeans, often under hazardous health conditions.⁹ An extreme example of these conditions is the fortified trading post at Delagoa Bay in

⁷ Somers J.A., *De VOC als volkenrechtelijke actor* (Gouda: 2001).

⁸ Boxer J.R., *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600–1800* (London: 1965); Gaastra F.S., *Bewind en beleid bij de VOC. De financiële en commerciële politiek van de bewindhebbers, 1672–1702* (Zutphen: 1989); Gaastra F.S., *De geschiedenis van de VOC* (Zutphen: 1991); Jacobs E.M., *Koopman in Azië. De handel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie tijdens de 18e eeuw* (Zutphen: 2000).

⁹ Oostindie G. (ed.), *Dutch Colonialism, Migration and Cultural Heritage* (Leiden: 2008).

present-day Maputo, on the east coast of Africa. The post was established in 1721 in the hope of acquiring gold – important in the trade in Asia – from the semi-mythical African ‘empire’ of Monomotapa, which existed only on European maps at that time. Life in this settlement was extremely harsh. The fort was situated in a malaria region, which turned it into one of the many graveyards of Europeans in the tropics. There were other setbacks as well. In 1722 the settlement was captured by English pirates who abducted a number of the personnel and destroyed the fort. Six years later in 1728 a mutiny broke out in which almost half of the men took part. This mutiny was put down with an iron fist. Barely a year later in 1729 a military force of the fort was massacred by inhabitants of the region. During the ten years’ existence of the settlement a large number of lives were lost; no less than 490 of the 620 men (about 80%) who were sent to the settlement over a period of ten years died, most of them from malaria. The trading post was eventually closed down in 1730.¹⁰

Culturally and numerically the Dutch presence in Asia remained limited in most settlements, even in the VOC’s administrative and shipping centre Batavia. The reason for this was the relatively small number of settlers and company personnel and the use of Malay and Portuguese as communication languages. Missionary efforts were furthermore largely confined to Ambon and Ceylon and met limited success. The only successful Dutch colonisation in the VOC area was in the Cape Colony in South Africa.

In 1652 the VOC had established a refreshment post for its ships at the Cape of Good Hope. The limited purpose of this refreshment post was to reduce the large number of deaths on board of the VOC’s ships. A small settlement was thus established at the tip of Africa with a fort that could defend the anchorage against European rivals and with gardens at the foot of Table Mountain, which were later developed into a botanical garden. In 1652 several hundred Europeans were living in this colony, subsequently supplemented with slaves. Europeans numbered around 20 000 at the end of the eighteenth century, by far the largest number of colonists in any part of the Dutch empire. In other settlements, including Batavia, the total European population

¹⁰ Sleigh D., *Die buiteposte: VOC-buiteposte onder Kaapse bestuur 1652–1795* (Pretoria: 1993); Paesie R., *Het VOC-fluitschip Stavenisse en de ontdekking van Terra Natal* (Amsterdam: 2002) 151–212; Huigen S., *Knowledge and Colonialism. Eighteenth-Century Travellers at the Cape*. (Leiden-Boston: 2009) Chapter 3.

ranged between a few hundred to 2.000 souls. If it had been solely in the VOC's hands, the Cape Colony would have remained confined to a small part of the Western Cape. The intention was to appropriate no more land than was necessary to provide the ships calling in Table Bay with food. However, after 1657 the VOC needed the help of independent colonists to achieve this goal, as the nomadic Khoikhoi did not practise agriculture and could not supply enough cattle for slaughter either. In search of grazing lands for their sheep and cattle, the colonists spread out into the interior. It was because of these colonists that in the next centuries the Dutch language (in one form or other) and culture could spread across southern Africa as far as present day Zimbabwe and Angola.¹¹

While the VOC dominated trade between Asia and Europe and within Asia itself until the middle of the eighteenth century, the situation in the Atlantic had always been different. To emulate the successes of the VOC the West-Indische Compagnie (WIC) was established in 1621. The WIC was a joint-stock company equivalent to the VOC, uniting previous enterprises, and organised according to Chambers with a similar board of directors, the 'Heren XIX' (Gentlemen XIX).¹² The Atlantic was an easier area to trade than the Indian and Pacific Oceans; journeys were much shorter and the capital layout as a result lower, which made it more difficult for the WIC to monopolize trade. Trade in the Atlantic was also much more varied than in Asia, where the spice trade remained dominant until the eighteenth century. The Triangular Trade, bartering European goods (guns and textiles) for slaves in West Africa, exporting these slaves to South America, the Caribbean Islands and North America, and taking American cargo (sugar, tobacco, salt) back to Europe, was very efficient. In terms of turnover, however, the slave trade had a share of only 13% of the total Dutch trade in West Africa with gold coming first with 75%.¹³

¹¹ Elphick R. – Giliomee H. (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652–1840* (Cape Town: 1992); Biewenga A., *De Kaap de Goede Hoop. Een Nederlandse vestigingskolonie, 1680–1730* (Amsterdam: 1999); Shell R.C.-H., *Children of Bondage. A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652–1838* (Hanover, N.H.: 1994).

¹² From 1674, after the WIC went bankrupt, they became the Gentlemen X ('Heren X').

¹³ Heijer H. den, *De geschiedenis van de WIC* (Zutphen: 1994); Heijer H. den, *Goud, ivoor en slaven: scheepvaart en handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674–1740* (Zutphen: 1997); Emmer P.C., *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580–1880: Trade, Slavery and Emancipation* (Aldershot: 1998).

The most remarkable chapter in the history of the WIC was no doubt the conquest and subsequent loss of northeastern Brazil (1630–1654). The prospects in Brazil looked particularly promising for the WIC under the governorship between 1636 and 1643 of Johan Maurits van (Johann Moritz von) Nassau-Siegen (1604–1679). Johan Maurits was not only a capable military commander who extended Dutch power in Brazil and conquered Portuguese fortresses on the African coast to secure the supply of slaves for the Brazilian sugar plantations, he also acted as patron of the arts and sciences, attracting a number of scientists such as Willem Piso (1611–1678) and Georg Marggraf (1610–1644), and the painters Frans Post (1612–1680) and Albert Eckhout (1610–1666).¹⁴

After the loss of Brazil in 1654 and of New Amsterdam in 1664 Dutch power in the Atlantic became limited to the West-African Gold Coast, the Caribbean and the adjacent Guyanas on the northern coast of South America. From 1667 Surinam developed into the most important Dutch colony in the Atlantic after the termination of British rule in that year. Because of stringent conditions placed on Surinam by the States General and for lack of funds the WIC had to enter into a venture with the city of Amsterdam and Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck (1637–1688) as a private investor, to establish the ‘Sociëteit van Suriname’ (Society of Surinam). This society became the governing body of the colony in 1683 with Cornelis van Aerssen as its first governor.

After 1740 the Dutch Republic lost its hegemonic position in world trade because of the mercantilist policies of other European states, which affected Dutch exports negatively. The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) delivered the final blow, when hundreds of Dutch merchant ships were taken by the English. As a result the once great trading companies, which were already making losses before the war, collapsed at the end of the eighteenth century: the WIC was disbanded in 1791 and the VOC in 1799. Their colonial territories were taken over by the Dutch state or conquered by the English.

¹⁴ Boogaart E. van den – Hoetink H.R. – Whitehead P.J.P. (eds.), *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, 1604–1679: a Humanist Prince in Europe and Brazil: Essays on the Occasion of the Tercentenary of his Death* (The Hague: 1979); Brunn G. (ed.), *Aufbruch in neue Welten. Johann Moritz von Nassau-Siegen (1604–1679): der Brasilianer* (Siegen: 2004).

Knowledge Networks

Some years ago, the historian of science, Klaas van Berkel, stated that the VOC as an organisation was broadly speaking not interested in stimulating research activities, a statement which has recently been affirmed by Cook.¹⁵ The VOC and WIC were primarily interested in making profit or, in the case of the Sociëteit, in governing a colony. One of the directors of the VOC, Nicolaas Witsen (1641–1717), famously complained about this lack of scholarly interest among his colleagues from the VOC when he wrote to a friend, ‘Why does your Honour ask about scholarly curiosity in India? No, Sir, it is only money and no knowledge which our people are after, which is regrettable’.¹⁶ Notwithstanding this complaint the trading companies provided an infrastructure for individuals such as Witsen to get access to sources of information about the foreign world, in his case aided by the company’s resources. Servants of the VOC helped Witsen gather information for his book on Tartary. On the other hand the trading companies seldom took the initiative for research. More often they tried to prevent research results from being published, such as was the case with the *Amboinsche Kruidboek*, a description of the flora on Ambon by Georg Rumphius (1627–1702). The Gentlemen XVII thought it prudent not to publish the manuscript, because they were afraid that competitors might use the information for their own benefit. It appeared forty years after the death of its author.¹⁷

Let me give another, less familiar example from South Africa to clarify the relationship between the trading company and the individual researcher: the researches in South Africa of Dutch army officer Robert Jacob Gordon (Doesburg, 1743–Cape Town, 1795) [Fig. 1].¹⁸

¹⁵ Berkel K. van, *Citaten uit het boek der natuur* (Amsterdam: 1998) 146; Cook, *Matters of Exchange*, 338. The VOC had a limited interest in supporting botanical and medical research, but even in these fields the Company’s policy was not consistent.

¹⁶ ‘Wat vraegt UwelEd. na de geleerde curieushey van Indiën, Neen Heer, het is alleen gelt en geen wetenschap die onse luyden soeken aldaer, ’t gunt is te beklagen’, Gebhard J.F. jr., *Het leven van Mr. Nicolaas Cornelisz Witsen (1641–1717)* (Utrecht: 1881–1882) vol. 2, 340–341 (letter 1 August 1712); also quoted in: Berkel, *Citaten uit het boek der natuur* 145.

¹⁷ Berkel, *Citaten uit het boek der natuur* 142.

¹⁸ Cullinan P., *Robert Jacob Gordon 1743–1795. The Man and his Travels at the Cape* (Cape Town: 1992). The following relies on: Huigen, *Knowledge and Colonialism*, chapter 5.



Fig. 1. Anonymous, *Portrait of Robert Jacob Gordon in the uniform of the Scots brigade*, c. 1775–1795. Oil on canvas. Cape Town, William Fehr Collection.

Gordon is relatively well known in South Africa but still quite obscure in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Gordon probably went to live in the Cape Colony out of 'curiosity', that particularly early modern passion to learn more about nature and the world in general. After a return journey from the Netherlands to the Cape in 1773–1774, combined with a trip to the interior of South Africa, of which little is known, he settled in 1777 in South Africa and became a captain in the Dutch garrison at the Cape. In the 1780s he was promoted to the rank of colonel and commander of the Cape garrison. During his first years in South Africa, between 1777 and 1786, Gordon undertook four expeditions into the interior of southern Africa, to the Eastern Cape and into Namibia, crossing what was to be named (by him) the Orange River. He travelled for months accompanied by a draughtsman and some servants and covered enormous distances. Gordon's expeditions yielded manuscripts, drawings and maps. Originally these papers formed part of a more extensive collection which also included stuffed and living animals. According to visitors, Gordon's house in Cape Town was a remarkable museum – its most impressive piece probably being a stuffed giraffe. He committed suicide after the British occupation of the Cape in 1795, after which his scientific inheritance came into private British ownership. In 1913 the Rijksprentenkabinet in Amsterdam purchased the maps and drawings, known as the Gordon Atlas. The manuscripts, known as the Gordon Papers, were acquired in 1979 by the South African mining magnate, Harry Oppenheimer, who placed them in his private library, the Brenthurst Library in Johannesburg. The drawings and manuscripts cover a wide spectrum of subjects particularly in the field of botany, zoology, meteorology, geography and ethnography. Nothing is known about the whereabouts of the mounted animals from Gordon's private museum in Cape Town.¹⁹ Nevertheless, some specimens that were sent to Europe by Gordon are still traceable. The most illustrious object was the skeleton of a giraffe, which was shipped in two boxes to Holland in 1780 and subsequently mounted in the Museum of Stadholder Willem V. After the French invasion of the Dutch Republic in 1795 the giraffe was taken to Paris.²⁰

¹⁹ Rookmaaker L.C., *The Zoological Exploration of Southern Africa 1650–1790* (Rotterdam-Brookfield: 1989) 64.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

In 2007 Gordon's giraffe was still part of the permanent exhibition of the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle (just behind the visitors' entrance).

Gordon's scholarly career in South Africa displays the typical characteristics, which the historian of science Basalla ascribes to colonial scholars during the first phase of the practice of science in colonies.²¹ Gordon was a keen collector of particulars of the foreign world, which were gratefully used and published by the subject specialists in Europe. The results of Gordon's zoological research reached the European public via the Dutch natural historians Vosmaer and Allamand. Although he was unable to publish anything arising from his work, contributions by Gordon to the field of zoology were included in the Amsterdam edition of the *Histoire Naturelle* by Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon (1707–1788) – the 'nouvelle édition' (1766–1771) – that was edited by Allamand. Gordon supplied descriptions, which Allamand included as supplements. Nevertheless, Gordon did not see himself as inferior to researchers who did appear in print. For example, among his writings there are critical annotations to the publications of the scientific travellers La Caille and Sparrman. He also took a critical view of Buffon's more speculative theories; he calls Buffon one of the greatest minds on earth, but also one who had not seen everything with his own eyes. This was a kind way of saying that Buffon, head of the Jardin du Roi, the botanical garden of the French king in Paris, sometimes acted as an armchair scholar.

What is of particular interest to this volume is that most of Gordon's research was of little use to the Dutch East India Company. Of course the company had an interest in knowing more about the interior of southern Africa, but from archival records it is quite clear that this interest was limited to the possible existence of mineral reserves, particularly gold and copper, and the establishment of contacts with trading partners in the interior with a relatively developed technological civilization. At most Gordon provided the Company with a better picture of the geography of the interior and he established diplomatic ties with indigenous peoples in the Eastern Cape, which appeared to be useful during border conflicts in later years. But there is no trace in the VOC archives that the fascinating drawings of landscapes, plants, animals and people, or his manuscripts aroused any interest with the VOC's Council of Policy in Cape Town or the Gentlemen XVII in

²¹ Basalla G., "The Spread of Western Science", *Science* 156 (1967) 611–622.

Amsterdam. What is clear from his manuscripts is that his research was aimed at answering questions of Europe's scientific community, comparing statements in publications with his own observations, and sharing these with fellow members of the scientific community. This informal network of professional scholars and 'liefhebbers' in Europe and the colonial territories shared an empiricist epistemology and the same sort of inscription devices for producing 'immutable and combinable mobiles' (drawings, maps, specimens, descriptions)²² which at most had a limited commercial or political value for the trading companies, as Nicolaas Witsen experienced. [Fig. 2]

I would like to point out that Gordon to a large degree actually used the colonial infrastructure and his position as an army officer to further his own scientific curiosity. In fact, his move to South Africa even raised eyebrows in Holland. In a letter to an influential connection in Holland Gordon had to defend himself against accusations that he merely went to live in South Africa out of curiosity.²³ Nevertheless, scientific travellers such as Gordon were indebted to colonial authorities for the collection of data. Gordon was paid a salary as an army officer while following his inclination. In other cases the world outside Europe at least became more accessible for scientifically interested individuals as a result of the establishment of trading networks and the colonial occupation of overseas territories. Even women such as Maria Sybilla Merian (1647–1717), famous for her drawings of insects from Surinam, could visit the colonies. In most cases researchers of the extra-European world made use of the colonial infrastructure and could expand their activities by receiving some kind of support from colonial institutions and individuals. In many respects this is also true for contemporary scientists. For the French anthropologist of science, Bruno Latour, the ability of scholars and scientists to obtain support for their projects outside the domain of science is key to their success.²⁴

²² Latour, *Science in Action* 227.

²³ Nationaal Archief, The Hague (NA), Fagel-Archief, no. 2515; cf. Huigen, *Knowledge and Colonialism*, chapter 5.

²⁴ 'He who is able to translate others' interest into his own language carries the day. [...] So it is useless to look for the profit that people can reap from being interested in Pasteur's laboratory. Their interests are a consequence and not a cause of Pasteur's laboratory. Their interests are a consequence and not a cause of Pasteur's efforts to translate what they want or what he makes of them' (Latour B., "Give me a laboratory and I will raise the world", in Knorr-Cetina K.M. – Mulkay M. (eds.), *Science Observed. Perspectives on the Social Study of Science* (London: 1983) 141–170).

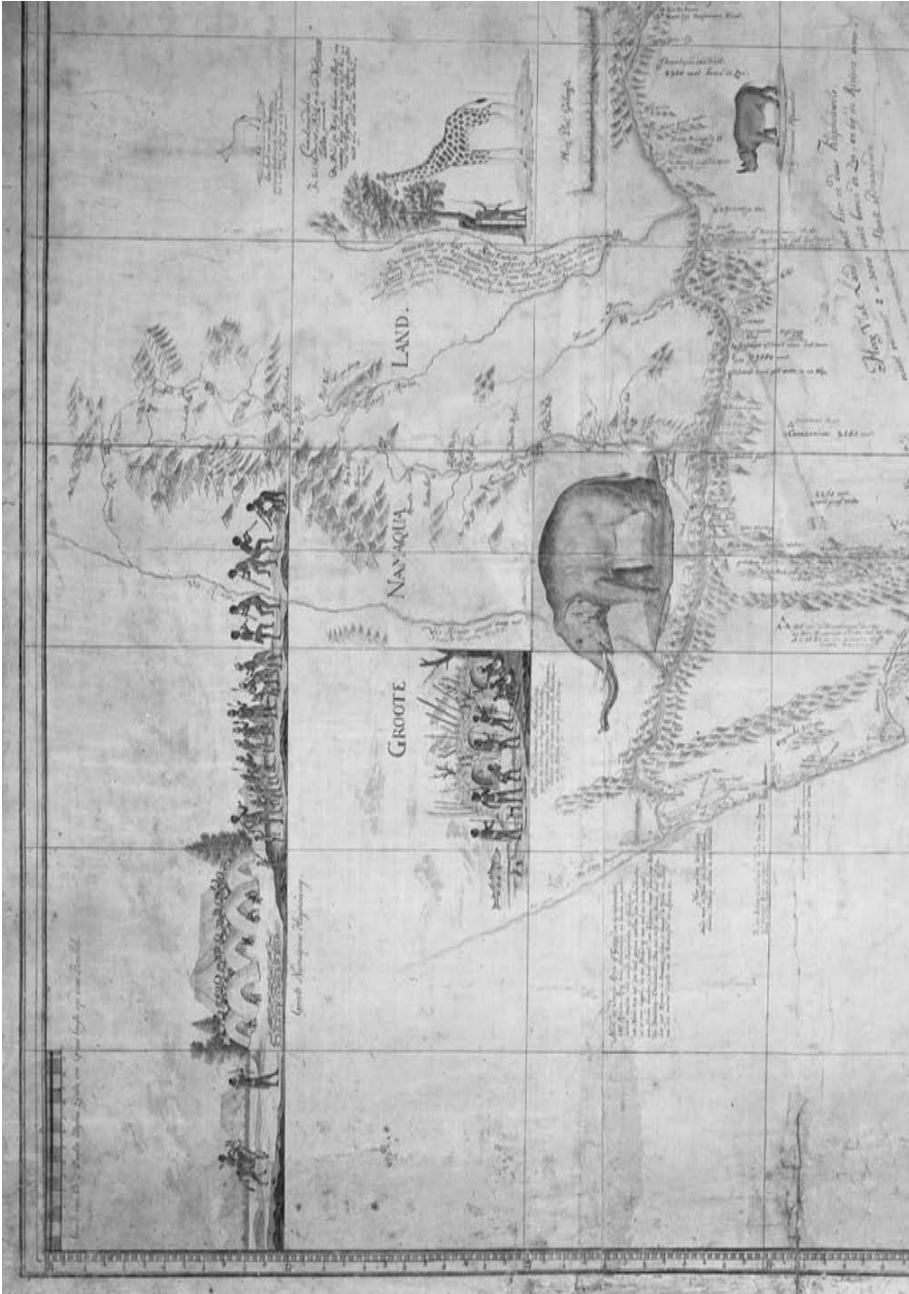


Fig. 2. Robert Jacob Gordon, *The basin of the Orange River (border between the present-day South Africa and Namibia)*, c. 1780–1795. Watercolour. Detail of the large map in the Gordon Atlas. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet.

At the site of reception the knowledge acquired through the Dutch trade networks was entered into new cycles of knowledge production.²⁵ Several essays in this volume demonstrate that knowledge produced in the Dutch colonial contact zones was distributed unevenly in the various European countries, with motivations ranging from curiosity to national economic interests. Japan was a special case. For Japanese intellectuals the VOC provided an opportunity to acquire *European* knowledge. During the latter part of the eighteenth century these intellectuals gradually moved beyond their traditional learning to develop the new discipline of 'Dutch Studies' (*Rangaku*), covering western medicine, natural philosophy, military technology, and language studies. This discipline survived the Dutch trading companies well into the nineteenth century.²⁶

²⁵ Cf. Livingstone, D.N., *Putting Science in its Place. Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago-London 2003).

²⁶ Blussé, *Bridging the Divide*.

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THE AMERICAS

ELIAS HERCKMANS.
A POET AT THE BORDERS OF DUTCH BRAZIL

Britt Dams

As I am preparing this paper, the French academic world is celebrating the 100th birthday of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who was born in 1908 and lived in Brazil from 1935 until 1939. In the course of four years of ethnographic research there, he stayed among local tribes twice. Back in France, as he was reflecting on his work, Lévi-Strauss realized the experience was not exactly the sort of thing that he had hoped for. Even though he had collected precious information and his work had been praised internationally, he had the impression that the indigenous reality would remain forever inaccessible. While writing *Tristes Tropiques*, as he puts it, he faced an ‘insurmountable circle’.¹ About 300 years earlier, Elias Herckmans, a national poet, was sent out by the Dutch West India Company to Brazil where he was also confronted with this culturally *other* reality. The question that is central to my analysis is quite straightforward: How did Herckmans respond to this *otherness*?

Dutch Brazil

The Dutch colonists participating in the Brazilian adventure are often portrayed as traders seeking for profit. Neither interested in the founding of a settlement, nor in the local reality, it is generally assumed that they did not try to adjust to their new environment, but rather stuck to their old habits and customs. Almost everything they needed was imported from their home country, from building material over food to prostitutes.

¹ ‘Et voici, devant moi, le cercle infranchissable: moins les cultures humaines étaient en mesure de communiquer entre elles et donc de se corrompre par leur contact, moins aussi leurs émissaires respectifs étaient capables de percevoir la richesse et la signification de la diversité.’ Lévi-Strauss C., *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris: 1955) 43.

This is of course a generalisation and the opposite affirmation can be made as well. From 1637 until 1644, Johan-Maurits (1604–1679), Count of Nassau-Siegen, was appointed governor-general of Dutch Brazil. As the highest representative of the WIC, which had been founded in 1621, he ruled the colony located in the northeast of present-day Brazil. Johan-Maurits is well known for his collections of Brazilian and other curiosities. This *homo universalis* immediately fell in love with the country that he thought ‘one of the most beautiful in the world’.² Artists and scientists accompanied him overseas to record the Brazilian reality through descriptions, paintings and scientific works.³ He ordered the construction of the ‘ideal city’ Mauritsstad, a sort of *locus amoenus* on the island of Antônio Vaz. Next to one of his palaces, Johan Maurits cultivated a garden in which he celebrated and domesticated the tropical wilderness.⁴

In extenso, the whole scientific and artistic project that developed under the impulse of Johan-Maurits can be seen as a way of taming Brazilian reality through the gathering of knowledge. The arsenal of images, maps and descriptions served to demonstrate that the Dutch fully understood the region and its inhabitants. During this period, and not only under the impulse of Johan-Maurits’s humanist desire, a great amount of texts – in the broadest possible sense of that word – were produced. These texts make clear in which way the colony was perceived by those in power. Obviously, their representations were not neutral, but highly biased accounts, revealing the colonisers’ various interests. In the official discourse, authorised by the leaders of the West India Company, life in the colony was written down as well as given shape.

² Letter written the 3rd of February 1637 to the administrators. In: Boxer C.R., *The Dutch in Brazil 1624–1654* (Oxford: 1957) 9.

³ The *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* (1648) was published under his patronage, in collaboration with Georg Marckgraf, Willem and Johannes de Laet, and was considered the most comprehensive and detailed work on the natural history of Brazil until the early 19th century. The artists Frans Post and Albert Eckhout were also invited to paint the Brazilian people and landscapes. Caspar Barlaeus depicted the colony in *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia et alibi nuper gestarum, sub praefectura Illustrissimi Comitis J. Mauriti Nassoviae* [...] (1647). The governor wanted to make this book more accessible and asked for a second publication in German in 1660. Most illustrations are by Frans Post (1612–1680).

⁴ Silva M.A. da – Alcides M.M. “Collecting and Framing the Wilderness: The Garden of Johan Maurits (1604–79) in North-East Brazil”, *Garden History, Dutch influences* 30, 2 (2002) 153–176.

*A Poet Adventurer*⁵

In what follows, I want to present a reading of three texts related to the Dutch poet-adventurer Elias Herckmans (1596–1644). Born in Amsterdam, Herckmans studied history and Latin before he began his professional career as a trader in Russia for the firm De Vogelaer. In the meantime he established a reputation as a writer with the *Slach van Vlaenderen* (1624), a homage to Maurits van Oranje, and as a poet with *Sweedsche zeegtrompet* (1631) and *Lof der kael-koppen* (1635), dedicated to Constantijn Huygens. His masterpiece is the *Der Zeevaert Lof* (1634), partly famous for one of the illustrations by Rembrandt van Rijn.

In 1635, Herckmans went into the service of the WIC and arrived in Recife on the 23rd of December. One year later he was appointed governor of the provinces of Paraíba, Itamaracá and Rio Grande. In 1641, he accompanied Admiral Lichthardt to Bahia, where the Dutch took revenge against the Portuguese for burning down Dutch sugar cane fields and sugar mills in Pernambuco. He undertook an inland expedition of two and a half months to Copaoba in search of silver mines. After returning to Holland for a brief stay in 1642, he accompanied Hendrik Brouwer as vice-general in the Dutch expedition to Chile. After Brouwer's death he took control of the expedition and conquered Valdivia in 1643. But the expedition failed and since Herckmans was in charge, he was blamed for the defeat. Soon after returning to Recife, he died on the 6th of January 1644. In that same year Johan Maurits left Pernambuco. In 1645, the tide turned and the economic and political situation of the Dutch in Brazil became more and more fragile. In 1654, Recife finally surrendered and after a peace treaty in 1661, the Dutch Republic recognized Portuguese sovereignty over Brazil.

As a member of Johan Maurits's scientific entourage, Herckmans's writings are embedded in the imagery created by the various Dutch artists in Brazil⁶ but his texts also give an account of the experience of a single human being. All colonists were different, according to

⁵ The denomination was used by Alfred de Carvalho in his essay on Elias Herckmans. Cf. Carvalho A. de, *Aventuras e aventureiros no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: 1930) 97–108.

⁶ See: Buvelot Q. (ed.), *Albert Eckhout. A Dutch artist in Brazil* (Zwolle: 2004), Schmidt B., *Innocence Abroad. The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Washington: 2001), and Brien R.P., *Visions of savage paradise. Albert Eckhout, court painter in colonial Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam: 2006).

the period they lived in, their country of origin, or their social status. Herckmans's case therefore may not be exemplary for the Dutch attitude in the Brazilian colony – assuming there was a Dutch attitude. As a writer, was he gifted with a special gaze? And if so, is this reflected in his attitude and writings? What were his answers to the *other* reality displayed in the New World?

In what follows I hope to give an answer to these questions by reading the following texts: Herckmans's *General Description of the Captaincy Paraíba* and the accounts of two expeditions led by Herckmans to the interior of Brazil and to Chile, as they were transcribed by Barlaeus in his *Rerum per octennium*.⁷

General Description of the Captaincy Paraíba

In July 1639, Elias Herckmans wrote his *Journal. Algemene Beschrijvinghe van Paraíba*. The *Journal* was written on behalf of the High Council, who wanted an inventory of the sugar mills in order to impose proper taxation. Herckmans gives a slow and very detailed description of the captaincy. The official report begins with an outline of the colonial history and a brief account of the administration. After this short introduction, Herckmans depicts all possible features of the captaincy: from nature (landscape, rivers, animals and plants) over buildings (villages, forts, churches, convents, sugar mills...) to the indigenous population. The *Journal* ends with a long description of the Tapuia tribe.

The image drawn of the region is, predictably, that of an earthly paradise. This paradisiacal view originated with the first Europeans who set foot in the New World. Regarding Brazil, the Edenic image was already present in the letter sent by Pero Vaz de Caminha to the Portuguese king in 1500 and is still part of the Brazilian imagery

⁷ Herckmans E., "Journal. Algemene Beschrijvinghe van Paraíba (1639)", *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* (Utrecht: 1879) 318–367; Barlaeus C., *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia et alibi gestarum, sub praefectura illustrissimi comitis I. Mauritii Nassoviae comitis, historia. Brasilia et alibi nuper gestarum, sub Praefectura Illustrissimi Comitis I. Mauritii, Nassoviae, Comitis, Nunc Vesaliae Gubernatoris et Equitatus Foederatorum Belgii Ordinum sub Auriaco Ductoris, Historia* (Amsterdam, Blaeu: 1647) 213–223 (for the expedition to Copacoba), 277–290 (for the expedition to Chile).

today.⁸ Herckmans inscribes his text in this tradition by emphasising the fertility of the land and the healthy air of the country. Paraíba is a little paradise, with fresh air, green and fertile soil producing the best sugar cane, clean rivers containing plenty of fish, and so on... It seems as though all growing plants and every living creature are mentioned in the long enumeration, engendering a very picturesque description of Paraíba.

Both in terms of style and themes, this text is very similar to those of other Dutch chroniclers of the same period. One of the recurring examples of this shared rhetoric is the importance given to the names of the perceived reality. Herckmans mentions words that define a typical Brazilian reality in their original language: in Portuguese (for example 'farinha', 'aldeia', 'capitania') or in the indigenous language, defined by Herckmans as the 'Brazilian' language. Words in Herckmans's vernacular language alternate with the indigenous ones, creating a hybrid speech, for instance in his depiction of the bay still known today as the Bahia da Traição, he mentions both the Portuguese name – 'Bahia de Tracaon' – and the 'Brazilian' one – 'Tibira Caioutuba' or 'Caeiovael de Tibera'.⁹

Many names are etymologically explained. In fact, we owe the first account of the origin of the word Paraíba to Herckmans:

This region (or Captaincy) is named Paraíba; a Barbaric or, better, a Brazilian word meaning rough sea, arduous water, also a rough harbour to come in, [...] because *Para* is slithering harbour or river and *yba* is rough, whereof appears that this river, which is the biggest of the landscape, has its name from its slithering mouth, and in the same way the landscape has its name from the river, that is named, Paraíba.¹⁰

⁸ Until today, the image of a tropical paradise persists in Brazilian popular culture. It is still used as a theme in songs and tv-shows, often ironically. About the construction of the myth: Buarque de Holanda S., *Visão do Paraíso* (Rio de Janeiro: 1959).

⁹ Herckmans, "Journaal" 347.

¹⁰ 'Dit landschap (anders Capitania) wort genaemt Paraiba; is een Barbarische ofte, om beter te seggen, een Brasilaens woort ende betekent een verdorven see, een quaet water, item een quade haven om in te comen, [...] want *Para* is een haven ofte rivier met een bocht, en *yba* is quaet te seggen, waer uyt blijktt dat die reviere, die de grootste is van dit landschap, haren naem heeft nae de mont ofte bochtige incomen derselver, ende wederom het landschap sijnen naem nae de revier, dat is Paraiba, genaemt'. Herckmans, "Journaal" 319.

Explaining the etymology leads to ethnology *avant la lettre*. It gives him a pretext to insert Indian tales in his exposition. One of the most enchanting examples is the following one:

The Potiguaras caught a young man from a hostile tribe and handed him over to a woman in the village to look after him, ordering her to guard him and to feed him well, for they wanted to eat him in the future. The woman acquitted herself so well of this task that she and the young man, whose name was Guará, fell in love with each other. For a long time the villagers couldn't get hold of Guará, because the elders of the village did not want to disturb the woman and letting her become a testimony for future violence. So they waited, until on a certain day she left the *aldeia*. The men took the opportunity and caught the young man taking him with them to slay him at a place near the river. The woman – it is uncertain if she came back earlier than foreseen or for other reasons – hearing what was happening, came running to the riverside, took the victim in her arms and, embracing him, screamed: “Ó Guara mama”, meaning: my Guará, they want to kill you. That is how this river got its name.¹¹

Through these descriptions we also learn more about the natives of Paraíba, the Pitiguaras. Herckmans gives information about a typical Brazilian fruit, the cashew nut, and describes the effect caused by the drinking of a cashew concoction. The liquor makes the Brazilians so drunk that it makes them lazy and leads them to ‘barbaric sins’.¹² In explaining the origin of the word Tiberoy, he also informs us about sexual ‘deviances’:

The word Tiberoy comes from Tiberoy, which means Sodomitic sins. Long time ago, in the neighbourhood of this water, the Pitiguaras (fighting against the Tapuia, who are another kind of Indians who come from higher in the country) took a young Tapocia-Indian as a prisoner and abused him there. Hence they named the place Tiberoy, which means water of the Buggery.¹³

¹¹ Nederveen Meerkerk H.C. van, “Indian tales. Relationship between the Indians and the Dutch in XVIIcentury Brazil”, *Indians do Nordeste: Temas e Problemas* 2, UFAL (Macció: 2000) 79.

¹² ‘...waerin sij haer gansch droncken drincken, ende als dan vervallen tot grove ende barbarische sonden.’ Herckmans, “Journaal” 347–348.

¹³ ‘Het woort Tiberoy is van Tiberoy affcomstich, dat betekent Sodomitische sonden. Omtrent dit water hebben de Pitiguaras in ouden tijden (oorlogende tegens de Taboeyers, dat een ander soort van Brasilianen zijn, die hooger uyt het landt comen) eenen jongen Taboeyer gevangen genomen, dien sy aldaer misbruyckten, noemende de plaets Tiberoy, dat is te seggen het water der Boggery’. Herckmans, “Journaal” 331.

It would be tempting to attribute this colourful writing to Herckmans's poetical background, but most Dutch chronicles apply similar strategies.

Even if Herckmans throws some light upon habits among the Pitiguares or 'Brazilians', he focuses more on another tribe, the Tapuia. Why did he choose to give a full description of the Tapuia tribe instead of focusing on the Pitiguares?

*Tupi or not Tupi?*¹⁴ That was the question for the Dutch and the Portuguese colonizers in Brazil. In the beginning of the 17th century, the native population was divided by Europeans in two groups: the civilised or Tupi and the non-civilised or Tapuia. The Portuguese conquered and subjugated most of the Tupi-tribes. As a result, these tribes gave up their nomadic existence and started living along the coast in little villages. The Pitiguar whom Herckmans encountered in Paraíba were members of this group. Tapuia means 'from a different tongue' or 'enemy' in Tupi-language and the Portuguese used the same term referring to the natives they were unable to conquer. Tapuia were most often depicted naked to accentuate their savageness and 'non-civilized' status. Despite their savageness and their resistance to Christianization or European education, most of the tribes supported the Dutch in an alliance against the Portuguese.¹⁵

The priority for the Dutch was not to convert the Indians to their faith, but to establish relations of friendship and military alliance. They hoped this attitude would make it easier to achieve their goal of a flourishing colony based on trade and thus to make profit. The attitude of the Dutch towards the natives was more positive than their treatment of the African slaves. Indian slavery was prohibited since the creation of the WIC. The natives obtained freedom in order to guarantee the security of the Company. Violations against this rule were mostly severely punished.

¹⁴ Andrade O. De, 'Manifesto Antropófago', *Revista da Antropofagia* I, 1 (São Paulo: 1928). The *Cannibal Manifesto* is Brazilian modernism's most celebrated text.

¹⁵ The Dutch attitude towards the natives of the New World was mainly positive. The image of America circulating in the Netherlands fitted into a local political context. Since around 1560, the Spanish attitude in the New World was compared to the own experience of tyranny. Similarities between the *innocent Indian* and the Dutch were portrayed in drawings, pamphlets and other texts. With the expiration of the Truce in 1621 the WIC decided to form alliances with the 'princes and natives of the lands' with whom they shared an antipathy towards 'savage Spaniards'. More on this topic see Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*.

For the Europeans who never left the ‘civilized’ part of the colony the wilderness with its inhabitants signified the unknown and the inaccessible. The Tapuia lived on the border of the colony. As allies they were part of the colonial community, but in their habits and customs they were incomprehensible, partly because they never gave up their nomadic existence, but most of all because their faith and rituals were very different from the Western way of thinking and acting. Everyone feared the Tapuia:

The country [...] is so beautiful and fertile, you couldn’t wish for anything better, but we did not see anybody, everybody ran away, because they were afraid of our people, but most of all, as we could presume, of the Tapuia, whom they fear more than the Devil, because of their cruelty, knowing that they have no mercy, and not only towards people, they also kill and destroy Beasts [...].¹⁶

Leaving these ‘savages’ in the periphery was more advantageous to the Dutch. The Tapuia were held in an inhospitable and frightening place populated by dangerous animals and other fearful creatures like tigers, different kinds of ants and snakes.¹⁷

Herckmans ends his report with a negative image of Edenic Brazil. The Tapuia are not living in paradise; their arid territory looks like hell. The soil is not fertile but stony and barren; there is neither cattle running around nor colourful birds flying in fresh air. There are only wild pigs and poisonous snakes and the rivers are filled with man-eating fish looking like pigs.

There is no caesura in style with the first part of the *Journal*. The Tapuia, their territory and appearance are described with the same accuracy: they are tall and very strong; they have big heads with black hair; they run around completely naked...¹⁸ Herckmans stresses their qualities: they are very humble towards their King and they obey unreservedly, especially when it comes to fighting the enemy. They lead a

¹⁶ ‘t Landt [...] is soo schoon ende vruchtbaer, dat men’t niet beter soude kunnen wenschen, doch sagen daer niet een mensche, soo was alle ’t volck verlopen, soo uyt vreesse voor de onse, doch meest, als wel te vermoeden was van de Tapuyas, dewelcke sy, weggen hare wreetheyt, meer vreesen als den Duyvel, wetende datse niemant quartier geven, ende niet de Menschen alleen, maar oock de Beesten dootslaen ende vernielen [...].’ Laet J. de, *Het Iaerlyck Verhael van Joannes de Laet 1624–1636. Boek XI–XIII* (1634–1636) (The Hague: 1937) 48.

¹⁷ l’Honoré Naber S.P. (ed.), *Toortse der zee-vaert door Dierick Ruiters (1623). Samuel Brun’s Schifffarten (1624)* (The Hague: 1913) 20–30.

¹⁸ Herckmans, “Journal” 359.

completely bestial and unconcerned life but they fight vigorously and are not afraid to kill.¹⁹ He mentions that even if they sometimes visit the centre of the colony as friends, it is safer to escort them back to the border, otherwise they could hurt Dutchmen and cause other damage on their way.²⁰ When it comes to their strength, he exaggerates their physical skills: little children already learn to walk at the age of 9 or 10 weeks and soon thereafter they run to the water and learn to swim; the oldest members of the tribe reach the age of 160 and some attain the age of 200.²¹ In fact, what he does, is enumerating the qualities of a good and strong ally. This is an official report for the High Council, to whom this kind of information is of great importance.

Johannes de Laet was the first Dutchman who described the Tapuia. Even though Herckmans probably relied on de Laet's descriptions,²² he adds new and valuable ethnologic elements. He gives for instance the reason for the Tapuia migration to the coast in the months of November, December and January. During this period no cashew is to be found, which is why they have to move closer ashore to find their food.²³

Different aspects of the tribal life are mentioned: rites of passage, marriage (the ceremony, polygamic relationships), burial and cannibalistic practices. Most of the information is not new and can be found in other texts. Although Herckmans never witnessed them himself, his depiction of endocannibalistic practices is (again) very detailed. He notes how the Tapuia prepare their dead fellowmen very carefully in a dish during an anthropophagic ritual. Before the ceremony, they clean and braise the body. Every part of the body will be eaten, even the bones, which will be burnt and crushed to make flour.²⁴

When it comes to their religion, Herckmans states that the Tapuia are 'ignorant' and 'uneducated'; they have 'no knowledge of the true God' but serve 'the Devil or some evil spirits'.²⁵ He even stresses that

¹⁹ Ibid., 361.

²⁰ Ibid., 367.

²¹ Ibid., 366.

²² He relied most probably also on the accounts of previous authors like Staden and Thévet.

²³ Herckmans, "Journaal" 359.

²⁴ Ibid., 365.

²⁵ Ibid., 360: 'Het syn onwetende ende ongeleerde menschen, geen kennisse hebbende vanden waren Godt ofte sijne geboden, maar integendeel dienen den Duyvel ofte eenigerhande boose geesten'.

‘they don’t know what’s baptism, nor circumcision’.²⁶ Sorcerers living among them can predict the future and get in touch with the (evil) spirit, who can appear in different forms, as an animal or as a fellow Tapuia. Herckmans never witnessed such appearances himself, but he can rely on the testimony of several Dutch commanders who claim to have seen how the devil appeared among a Tapuia clan.²⁷

Herckmans mentions the devil, the appearance of spirits and endocannibalism with neither horror nor astonishment. The satanic and cannibalistic motives often recur in the corpus of Dutch texts about Brazil. Stereotypical features of barbarism like nakedness and cruelty are ascribed to the Tapuia, who are perceived as being part of untamed nature. The Brazilian reality in general is represented through the dialectic of the Edenic and the diabolic. The coast and the Tupi Indian (Eden) are the opposite token of the interior and the Tapuia Indian (Hell). Even though the *Journal* offers new ethnological information, it does not give an accurate representation of the reality of the Tapuia but partakes of a European worldview. By doing so, it proves the difficulties in obtaining knowledge about the Indian reality.

More than a century after the first discoveries the reality of the New World and its inhabitants are no longer an unwritten page, in fact they never were. The first texts encouraged what some call the ‘invention of Latin America’. Before Columbus set foot in the New World, Europe had a long tradition of writings about other cultures. The first representations were based on existing stories and tell us more about the European beliefs and value systems of that epoch than about the newly discovered regions. These texts were created within a ‘writing that conquers’ where the savage functioned as a ‘blank page’ that was filled with Old World representations and meanings.²⁸

Observation occurs through the mediation of familiar cultural schemes and Herckmans’s gaze is no exception. He does not render a total reliable description of Indian tribes and still uses stereotypical images: the barbarian, the cannibal, the sorcerer.... In this way, he annihilates the cultural diversity. The Indian is incorporated in the

²⁶ Ibid., 364: ‘weten sij oock noch van doop, noch van besnijdenis’.

²⁷ Ibid., 360.

²⁸ The phrase is that of Michel de Certeau, who described the encounter as a conquest and confrontation, during which the scriptural and the oral aspect interact. The voyagers possessed a powerful weapon: ‘l’écriture conquérante’. The New World was a blank page, the European exerted their ‘vouloir écrire’ upon the natives who functioned as ‘un corps à écrire’. Certeau M. de, *L’écriture de l’histoire* (Paris: 1975).

Western imagery and gets a classification and value during this process; the Indian becomes a stereotypical image. The symbolic value of the different Indian practices is negated; this value does not exist in the Western world and therefore cannot be defined in terms of the self. The cultural difference of the Indian is unreachable, which makes the acquisition of knowledge about the *other* impossible.²⁹

However, even if Herckmans's *Journal* was written on behalf of the High Council and reflects therefore the Company's interest and even if Herckmans's representation relies on common stereotypes, he also adds new little details and in these details we find very valuable information about the Indian customs and habits. When a couple of months later Herckmans ventures across the continent at the borders of the colony he meets on different occasions with natives. Does he manage to cross the cultural boundary and to look behind the veil of stereotypical images?

Seeking and Framing the Wilderness

Herckmans undertook two very different expeditions outside the colony. During the first one (into the interior) he wanted to find silver mines. The second expedition (to Chile) was a military campaign to conquer new territories, make alliances with the local Indian population and find gold. Why did he want to explore new regions? Was he led by curiosity, did he want to discover unknown territories or get in touch with natives? Was he in pursuit of personal profit and fame? He cannot tell us anymore, nor will we find an answer in his writings as the original reports got lost. To build our opinion we can only rely on the official chronicles. In Barlaeus's view he was led by patriotic feelings.

²⁹ Using stereotypes not only blocks the access to knowledge about the other but at the same time, through reiteration, disavows cultural differences. Homi K. Bhabha reads stereotypes in colonial discourse in terms of fetishism. The stereotype assumes a totalized fixity of the image of the other. 'The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation [...].' Bhabha H.K., "The other question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism", in *The location of culture* (London: 1994) 74–75.

While others achieved to install Dutch power with weapons and war he endeavoured to increase Dutch power and wealth through exploration of the lands and the study of people. Fate, however, superior to human intention, didn't allow the realization of this great performance.³⁰

On the 3rd of September 1641, Herckmans leaves Recife to undertake an inland expedition. His ambition is to find the silver mines reported to lie in Copaoba. Initially, 53 soldiers accompany him, together with 60 Indians, some 'Brazilian' women and 3 or 4 volunteers 'attracted by travel and new lands'.³¹ In the first days, 13 soldiers and 24 Indians already leave the expedition because of illness. The survivors persevere, cross rivers, walk through sugar cane fields, climb mountains and cut their way through the jungle with sickles. During the first weeks of the journey they are still inside the colony. They venture through known territory, across the homeland of the accompanying Potiguar.³²

Once they reach the border of the colony the journey gets tougher. On unknown territory even the Potiguar do not feel at ease anymore. Filled with apprehension they are unwilling to enter a region where nobody ever went. They are frightened, refuse to go on and advise to return.

They arrived at a point where nature denies any further passages, through dense woods, abysses of hills, the meandering paths, with neither hope for glory nor profit.³³

The soldiers lose their courage and start to panic. Nonetheless, Herckmans manages to persuade his men to go on. In an imposing oration he praises their strength and courage and explains how the expedition only began and that they should not listen to their fear. He guarantees his troops that food will easily be found by hunting and that they will encounter water in the valleys. After sending ten men back to Recife he convinces the others to strive further for glory and profit.

³⁰ 'Potentiae Belgarum alii viam aperuere armis et bello, hic studiosa terrarum et populorum indagatione, industria potentiam opesque augere studuit. Licet egregiis coeptis abnuerit fortuna, humanis consiliis potentior' (Barlaeus, *Rerum per octennium*, 313).

³¹ Ibid., 215: 'solo peregrinationis studio et terrarum novitate capti'.

³² The Potiguar used to live in the region before they were forced by the Portuguese to resettle by the coast.

³³ Barlaeus, *Rerum per octennium* 219: 'duci se, quo viam natura negaret, per opaca silvarum, montium praerupta, viarum anfractus, nulla gloriae, nulla emolumentum exspectatione'.

With renewed energy they resume the adventure in the direction of Copaboa. However, after an exhausting climb over a steep mountain they realize their final goal is still many miles away. The more they ascend, the more the men get physically tired. In addition, they are afraid their food supplies will not last for many more days. Afflicted with thirst and hunger, the soldiers refuse to take another step. Herckmans is eventually forced to turn back. After a two and a half months' journey, they are back in Recife, empty-handed.

The account, i.e. Barlaeus's representation of the expedition, is characterized by the same hybrid speech as Herckmans's *Journaal*. This rhetorical feature is typical for the corpus of texts about Dutch Brazil. It is difficult to determine which words and etymological clarifications Barlaeus took from Herckmans and which ones he added himself. Barlaeus retranscribes many flora and fauna encountered during the journey to Copaboa and comments on 'Brazilian' and Portuguese names. Some interesting examples:

- The hill from where the group started their return home received the name *Monte do Retorno* (Hill of return).³⁴
- The torrent *Capiiraguaba* means 'the torrent where the horses drink'.³⁵
- The 'River of Musk' got his name from its strong smell of crocodiles and snakes, very similar to the odour of musk.³⁶
- The mountain top *Irupari-bakai* means, 'here the devil looked back'. The name goes back to an Indian legend: when the devil climbed these mountains he was so overwhelmed by the height that when arriving at the top, he looked back.³⁷

After a brief stay in the Netherlands in 1642, Herckmans is sent out to Chile. Admiral Hendrik Brouwer, a former Governor-general for the VOC, asks the WIC permission to organise an expedition to the Southern part of the American continent. The WIC consents and sends a fleet with the instruction to conquer the city of Valdivia, to capture Peru, to occupy the Spanish gold and silver mines and to 'liberate'

³⁴ Ibid., 221: 'Mons unde digressi, Reditus Mons dictus'.

³⁵ Ibid., 218: 'torrens aquationis equorum'.

³⁶ Ibid., 218.

³⁷ Ibid., 217: 'Irupari-bakau. Hic Respexit Diabolus'.

the natives from the ‘Spanish tyranny’. Five ships leave the Brazilian coast in January 1643 but only four manage to cross Cape Horn and to reach the island Chiloé safely. Soon thereafter, they invade the city of Valdivia but Brouwer dies on the 7th of August. From then on Herckmans, vice-general of the expedition, takes control.

Initially, the situation looks promising. They manage to convince some local tribes to join forces in a partnership against the Spanish. On the 29th of August, Herckmans shows his diplomatic qualities in a grand oration for about 300 people. He wants to prove to the natives that the Dutch feel nothing but sympathy towards them. In his speech he stresses the heroism of the Chileans against the Spaniards and also tells about the Dutch earlier exploits in the Orient and in Brazil. Underlining their military power, he wants to make clear how powerful they could be against the Spaniards if they joined forces. As a proof of friendship he presents them with ceremonial gifts and with the ‘letters of credential’ from the States General to the Chileans.³⁸ Unfortunately, no copy survives.

Five days later Herckmans gives a second grand and dramatic speech and proposes an alliance based on friendship and trade. He makes a diplomatic mistake though by asking for the Chileans’ help to conquer the gold mines. This reminds the Chileans of the Spanish and the tyranny they had inflicted in their pursuit of gold. Thereafter the alliance with the natives abruptly comes to an end. On the 14th of September, in a letter to Constantijn Huygens, he puts it as follows:

They affirm that they do not possess any provision of gold, but they pointed out where the mines are. However, they do not want to work there, or being forced to; the gold being the only cause of the war between them and the Castilians.³⁹

As the Dutch are largely outnumbered in men and equipment by the Spanish, Herckmans asks the WIC several times for support, but no reinforcement is sent. Finally, to make the situation even more unstable, there is a food shortage and the soldiers start to mutineer. The Chilean

³⁸ Schmidt, “Exotic Allies” 453.

³⁹ ‘Goud, seyden sy, in voorraat niet te hebben, maer wesen de mijnen aen daer ‘t is, doch wilden niet aen ‘t mineren, noch oock daertoe gedwongen wesen; het goud de enigste oorsaek van den oorlog tusschen haer en de Castellanen tewesen’. Worp, J.A. (ed.), *De briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens (1608–1687)* (The Hague: 1911–1917), vol. III 444–445.

adventure ends in failure. Herckmans is constrained to leave Chile and the newly conquered city. In an official letter to Johan-Maurits he briefly explains the reasons for the defeat. Back in Brazil, the company blames Herckmans for the unsuccessful enterprise. There is no time to put him to trial, however, as he dies soon after his return to Recife.

Nevertheless, Herckmans did not return empty-handed from Chile; he brought back an invaluable treasure: a vocabulary of the Chilean Indians, probably Arouak. Barlaeus inserted the whole document in his *Rerum per octennium*. The glossary contains over 400 words and more than 40 expressions, which give ethnological information about the habits of the Indian population.

Barlaeus added general information about the natives of Chile and portrays them with the stereotypical features of savages. In his description Barlaeus notes that they have scarcely any marks of religion and he enumerates their 'bad' qualities: they are lazy, undisciplined and often get drunk. They have one quality, the essential one for an ally: they fight almost as well as Europeans.⁴⁰ Their general traits resemble those of the Tapuia as described by Herckmans in the *Journal*.

The two accounts seem to render a binary vision of the Brazilian reality and to present the civilized/savage model of colonial identification. They include some of the common 17th Century European stereotypes about the nature and people of Brazil. Since 1492, writers and artists had written, mapped and illustrated the New World. Stories and other representations influenced each other, creating a vast intertextual network around an imaginary space. The appropriation of knowledge about exotic regions and cultures involved the use of stereotypes and inevitably led to commonplaces and prejudices.⁴¹

Concerning the adventure to Copaoba, Barlaeus sets the atmosphere of the experience. The deeper the expedition penetrates the interior, the more difficult the journey becomes and the more the company and the Potiguar get scared. Once they enter the unknown territory, they enter the homeland of the Tapuia, the wilderness, a space only inhabited by beasts and vermin:

⁴⁰ Barlaeus, *Rerum per octennium* 277–278.

⁴¹ Burke P., *A Social History of Knowledge. From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge: 2000) 196.

Everywhere they found plenty of mice, rats and snakes: but no goats nor any kind of pig. They only caught three or four armadillos. During those days no birds were to be seen in the air.⁴²

The inland of Brazil functions as the counter image of the colony. The wilderness is something out there, something alien. At first glance, the image given by Barlaeus appears to be reducible to the dichotomy coast/interior. Between what is known or comprehensible – the colony – and what is not – the wilderness – runs a clear frontier. The unknown territory simultaneously generates curiosity and threat, resulting in an ambivalent desire to seek and frame the wilderness. To cross the border is to penetrate the obscure, a frightening space where barbarism and savageness reign.⁴³ During the centuries of colonization this border was gradually displaced, as more territories and Indians were incorporated in the space of the self. The complete domestication of the wilderness never took place, however. Up to this very day, parts of the Brazilian interior are still unknown. Recently, in June 2008, Brazil discovered a still uncontacted Indian tribe in the Amazon region.⁴⁴

A closer reading of the accounts uncovers a more complex reality and reveals a tension between Herckmans's experience and the descriptions of that experience by Barlaeus. We have to keep in mind that the *Rerum per octennium* is not written by an eyewitness – Barlaeus never set foot in the New World. The famous Latinist based his account of the Dutch colonial empire on the abundant sources available in Holland at the time and rewrote Herckmans's report following humanist conventions of the Golden Age.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the colonial binary discourse is destabilised by the little traces left by Herckmans

⁴² Barlaeus, *Rerum per octennium* 222. 'murium gliriumque et anguium toto itinere abunde fuit. caprearum aut suilli generis nihil. Armadilliae non nisi tres quatorve captae. Aër quoque per hos dies, absque volucribus, visus.'

⁴³ Pompa C., *Religião como Tradução. Missionários, Tupi e Tapuia no Brasil colonial*, EDUSC (Bauru: 2003) 199–227.

⁴⁴ FUNAI, the Brazilian government's Indian affairs department, estimates there are still approximately 68 uncontacted tribes in Brazil, about two dozen tribes have been officially confirmed. URL: www.funai.gov.br

⁴⁵ Barlaeus did not want to render a critical view of the colony. On the contrary, the *Rerum per octennium* celebrates unconditionally Johan Maurits's achievements in Brazil. It is a monumental work filled with allusions to ancient texts. The comparison with historical figures serves to demonstrate that the Dutch exploits in the Brazilian colony were even more remarkable. See Schmidt, *Innocence abroad* 254–57 and Grafton A., *New Worlds, Ancient texts. The Power of Tradition and the Chock of Discovery* (Harvard: 1995).

in Barlaeus's text. The Indian words were studied and left by Herckmans. Through these words we get fragments of life of the 'other', not only of the Indian who spoke them but also of Herckmans who was the first to write them down. We owe the glossary to his interest in the Indian language and by extension in the Indian culture.

One can argue that the study of the practices and the language of another culture are in support of the conquest. Knowledge about the newly discovered territories and people was used not only to conquer more effectively, but also as a tool in the competition with other European companies. As was the case with maps,⁴⁶ possessing cultural information about native people was far from politically neutral and could have serious implications.⁴⁷ But even if it was Herckmans's goal to give the Company a functional tool for the conquest of Chile, as a patriotic act or to obtain personal fame; and even if as a poet and member of Johan Maurits's entourage, Herckmans was probably driven by a humanist interest in the exotic – the words and idioms were collected and put into the frame of the glossary, the same way Johan Maurits organised his tropical garden in Recife –, it still required his curiosity to lead this kind of research. In the meantime, an encounter took place between Herckmans and the 'other'. Fragments of that encounter emerge from the texts as subversive forces and break through the stereotypes giving us what Barthes called 'un effet de réel'.

Gazing at the Border

It was not my aim, as it was for Lévi-Strauss, to obtain objective information about the Brazilian Indian or about a Dutch poet. Instead, I gave my representation of a past reality through a description of three texts. This description is not and cannot be complete, for I am convinced that describing is not only 'être inexact ou incomplet, c'est changer de structure, c'est signifier autre chose que ce qui est montré'.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Second treasure Herckmans brought back to Recife, a shorter route near Strait Magellan in the South of Argentina to the Pacific Ocean, called Strait Brouwer.

⁴⁷ Burke, *Social History of Knowledge* 74–77.

⁴⁸ Barthes R., "Le message photographique", *L'obvie et l'obtus* (Paris: 1982) 12.

Through my reading I started a dialogue with a 17th Century Dutch *mercator sapiens*. Herckmans can't be reduced to a mere 'poet-adventurer' who was seeking personal fame and profit in the New World. Lingering at the border of the colonial society, he tried, consciously or not, to look behind the veil of stereotypes. The frontiers of the colonial world were real and imaginary at the same time. At this border a double encounter took place: his encounter with the natives and my encounter with him.

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OFFICERS OF THE WEST INDIA COMPANY, THEIR NETWORKS, AND THEIR PERSONAL MEMORIES OF DUTCH BRAZIL*

Michiel van Groesen

Between 1630 and 1654, when the Dutch West India Company controlled Pernambuco and several adjacent provinces of northeastern Brazil, thousands of European soldiers were sent to the colony. Military personnel accounted for just under half of Dutch Brazil's population, and while most of the non-Company men, women, and children lived in or around Recife, the armed forces faced the Portuguese enemy as far north as Maranhão and as far south as Salvador de Bahia. Their colourful impressions of life in the colony helped to shape Europe's image of colonial Brazil in the seventeenth century. Since the West India Company recruited its personnel not only from the United Provinces, but also from the Holy Roman Empire, the Southern Netherlands, Scandinavia, and England, soldiers' memories of Dutch Brazil reached a large audience in the Old World. The commercial incentives of publishers ensured the wider dissemination of some of their observations. This article will analyse how officers of the West India Company communicated their personal memories of Dutch Brazil, and how the means of distributing knowledge influenced early modern Europe's impressions of Brazil.¹

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¹ Although the literature on Dutch Brazil is abundant, there are few studies which focus on the military personnel of the Company: Wiznitzer A., "Jewish soldiers in Dutch Brazil (1630–1654)", *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 46, 1 (1956) 40–50; and Jacobs J., "Soldaten van de Compagnie: het militair personeel van de West-Indische Compagnie in Nieuw Nederland", in Ebben M.A. – Wagenaar F.P. (eds.), *De cirkel doorbroken: met nieuwe ideeën terug naar de bronnen: opstellen over de Republiek* (Leiden: 2006) 131–146, which relies partly on material from Dutch Brazil. For the Luso-Brazilian point of view, see: Cabral de Mello E., *Olinda restaurada: guerra e açúcar no nordeste, 1630–1654* (São Paulo: 1975). The emphasis in this article is on officers rather than on common soldiers for practical reasons. Since they could read and write, officers produced most of the representations of Dutch Brazil that have come down to us.

In *The Old World and the New*, John Elliott called it ‘a piece of unusual good fortune that the conquest of Mexico should have thrown up two soldier-chroniclers as shrewd in their observation and as vivid in their powers of description as [Hernán] Cortés and Bernal Díaz’.² Although few of the impressions of Dutch Brazil match the narratives of the sixteenth-century conquistadors for vividness and pure bewilderment at what the New World had to offer, their number and variety allow for a more systematic understanding of soldiers’ representations of an American colony. Mattheus van den Broeck from Dordrecht, for example, kept a journal describing the last eighteen months of his nine years’ service in Brazil. His narrative was edited and published in 1651 in Amsterdam. Corporal Peter Hansen Hajstrup also wrote a personal account but his was intended to be read only by his closest relatives. His *Memorial und Jurenal* also includes information on his children, and his later career as a schoolmaster in Flensburg. Another officer who later turned schoolmaster, the ensign Johann Philipp Mulheiser from the Palatinate town of Bergzabern, took his *album amicorum* to Brazil. This album is now a unique source for the social network of a military officer. And finally both Lieutenant Johan Bettinck, from the Gelderland garrison town of Doesburg, and Matthias van Ceulen, one of the nineteen directors of the West India Company who commanded Dutch troops in Brazil, had an inventory made of their private possessions, including their Brazilian memorabilia. These five sources, complemented by the more official narrative of Johan Nieuhof, published after his death in 1682, permit a broad analysis of how personal memories of Brazil were presented to those who had remained at home.

Officers in Brazil: Daily Life

After an Atlantic crossing which normally lasted between seven and nine weeks, the officers got their first glimpse of Brazil before the coast of Pernambuco. The majority must have been extremely relieved when they set foot on the island of Itamaracá or the Brazilian mainland. It would have been the first oceanic voyage for most officers, and tales of horror routinely circulated. Even many years later – when monumental retrospective publications like his dominated the European book

² Elliott J.H., *The Old World and the New, 1492–1650* (Cambridge: 1970) 19.

market – Johan Nieuhof still remembered hearing the story of a Portuguese vessel south of the equator which had floated for six weeks after the crew had died of starvation.³ Once in Brazil the soldiers found that the sea was never far away as the colony rarely extended more than five miles inland. After arriving in late 1639, Johann Philipp Mulheiser first spent several months offshore. He fought the Habsburg armada of Dom Fernão de Mascarenhas, Count of Torre in January 1640, and captured Spanish slave carriers in the autumn. In periods of Dutch expansion, the troops covered longer distances by sea: the December 1633 expedition to Rio Grande which made the reputation of Matthias van Ceulen, was principally a naval affair. Van Ceulen and his soldiers travelled by boat to the fortress *Tres Reyes* – soon to be renamed Fort Ceulen in honour of the victorious commander – and only went ashore when they were within touching distance of the Portuguese stronghold.⁴

But the officers spent most of their time in Brazil on land. In times of relative quiet they patrolled the area around Recife and the main sugar estates, while being quartered in one of the forts around the city. Here they made the long days bearable by drinking heavily, sometimes to the point where tensions between the men boiled over, although not all memoirs reported such incidents. The published account of Mattheus van den Broeck hardly makes a reference to infighting and mutual discontent. His edition, in this respect, is typical of published eye-witness reports of Dutch Brazil, which generally appeared at times of military conflict. Both in the 1630s, when the Dutch were in the ascendancy,

³ Nieuhof J., *Gedenkweerdige Brasiliaense zee- en lantreise* (Amsterdam: Weduwe Jacob van Meurs, 1682) 6: 'Ontrent drie jaren na mijne aenkomste op Brasil, wierdt een Portugees schip onder liny gevonden drijven, daer niet een levendigh mensch op was: maer waren alle overleden. Het had'er al zes weken gedreven, als uit de daghelix aentekening kon gezien worden' ('Some three years after my arrival in Brazil, a Portuguese ship was found floating south of the equator, which was completely empty: the whole crew had perished. It had floated around for six weeks, as could be established from the log'). Other fashionable late seventeenth-century publications, also issued by the Amsterdam publisher Jacob van Meurs, included those by Olfert Dapper and Arnoldus Montanus. Nieuhof's work on Brazil had been on the shelf for at least a decade before Van Meurs's widow finally decided to publish it: Eeghen I.H. van, "Arnoldus Montanus's book on Japan", *Quaerendo* 2 (1972) 267.

⁴ On Mulheiser's itinerary, see my article: "Van vaandrig in Brazilië tot dichter in Dordrecht: Het album amicorum van Johann Philipp Mulheiser (ca. 1603–ca. 1677)", *De zeventiende eeuw* 24, 2 (2008) 196–209. For Mulheiser's *album amicorum*: Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB), The Hague, ms. 129 F 6. On Van Ceulen's expedition to Rio Grande: Laet J. de, *Historie ofte Iaerlijck verhael*, ed. S.P. L'Honoré Naber, 4 vols. (The Hague: 1931–1937) III 208–216.

and in the troubled years of the Portuguese revolt after 1645, such accounts tended to emphasize unity rather than friction among the soldiers. The private diary of Peter Hansen Hajstrup, however, gives a more truthful indication of daily goings-on. Hansen reported regular bust-ups among the troops, almost always as a result of intoxication, and frankly admitted his own active involvement. On one of his first days in Brazil, while standing guard at the entrance gate to the bridge which connected Recife with the island Antonio Vaz, Hansen struck Lieutenant Willem Hartstein with his rifle and had to appear before a military court the following day. Because of his inexperience, he was released with a reprimand. The West India Company could not afford to be too strict on their men, as the safety of the colony depended on them and it was difficult to recruit more orderly employees. In the nine years that followed, Hansen showed few signs of improving his conduct. No fewer than seven times during his stay in Brazil did he become involved in brawls. Four times he was arrested or locked up, one time he killed an ensign with a blow to the head, once he pulled a sword on a colleague and challenged him to a duel, and once he shot an innocent bystander in the leg while quarrelling with a fellow soldier from Schleswig-Holstein.⁵

Hansen, in his *Memorial*, was unapologetic and unashamed of his actions. He censored his diary on two occasions, the only episodes he did not consider appropriate for his readership of relatives. On both occasions, Hansen changed from German to Portuguese, a language of which he must have picked up the basics in Brazil, and on both occasions, the episodes had a sexual connotation. In the first instance, Hansen reminisced about a girlfriend who had passed away; four years later he aimed to conceal the story about a colleague whose African mistress had had a stillborn child.⁶ Whereas Hansen made a clear distinction between such personal affairs and more public scraps with his fellow soldiers, both types of mischief were conspicuously absent from more stylized travel accounts edited before publication. Hansen's misbehaviour did not form an obstacle to his rise through the ranks of the

⁵ Ibold F. – Jäger J. – Kraack D.A. (eds.), *Das Memorial und Jurenal des Peter Hansen Hajstrup (1624–1672)* (Neumünster: 1995) 68, 91–92. See also: Kraack D.A., “Flensburg, an early modern centre of trade: The autobiographical writings of Peter Hansen Hajstrup (1624–1672)” in Roding J., Heerma van Voss L. (eds.), *The North Sea and culture (1550–1800). Proceedings of the international conference held at Leiden, 21–22 April 1995* (Hilversum: 1996) 235–46.

⁶ Ibold – Jäger – Kraack, *Das Memorial und Jurenal des Peter Hansen Hajstrup* 83, 100.

West India Company. Having arrived in Brazil as a common soldier in December 1644, he was promoted to the rank of corporal two years later, and eventually became *monsterschrijver* in November 1647. A *monsterschrijver* was responsible for the administration of a company – and had to keep records of payment.⁷ Being able to write and perform simple calculations must have been two of Peter Hansen Hajstrup's more useful traits, and he remained in the colony until January 1654.

Writing, for some, even opened the doors to the highest circles in New Holland, as Dutch Brazil was officially known. Johann Philipp Mulheiser, a former theology student in Leiden who had chosen a career in the army after his hometown in the Palatinate had come under fire in the Thirty Years' War, used his *album amicorum* to record the names of well over 500 friends, most of them in high places.⁸ In August 1640, when the naval battles had been won and he finally had the time to start using his album, he attended the legislative assembly initiated by governor-general Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen, often hailed as the first parliament in the history of Latin America. Within two weeks, Mulheiser shook hands with Johan Maurits himself [Fig. 1], with members of the High and Secret Council, and with the likes of the physician Willem Piso, and the minister Vicente Joachim Soler. His album reveals a particular fascination with representatives of the Dutch Reformed Church. Wherever his military duties took him, Mulheiser first approached the local ministers and missionaries requesting them to write an entry in his personal booklet. For two and a half years, Mulheiser remained in and around Recife, where in the various fortresses he encountered the highest military commanders of Dutch Brazil, such as Lieutenant Admiral Jacob Lichthart and Colonel Johann von Koin.⁹

In December 1642, when a revolt of Portuguese *moradores* had broken out in the northern *capitanía* Maranhão, the German ensign was sent

⁷ Ibid., 77, 79.

⁸ Groesen, "Van vaandrig in Brazilië tot dichter in Dordrecht". For his enrolment in Leiden: *Album Studiosorum Academiae Lugduno Batavae MDLXXV–MDCCCLXXV. Accedunt nomina curatorum et professorum per eadem saecula* (Den Haag: 1875) 212. Just under one hundred inscriptions in the album were entered in Brazil, the remainder were inscribed after Mulheiser's return to the Dutch Republic.

⁹ KB, ms. 129 F 6, fol. 7r (Johan Maurits); fol. 20r (Hamel); fol. 23r (Bas); fol. 185r (Codde van der Burgh); fol. 18r (Soler); fol. 238r (Piso); fol. 17r (Lichthart); fol. 31r (Von Koin). For the legislative assembly, see Boxer C.R., *The Dutch in Brazil 1624–1654* (Oxford: 1957) 117–120. On the ministers and missionaries in the colony, see Schalkwijk F.L., *The Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil (1630–1654)* (Zoetermeer: 1998).

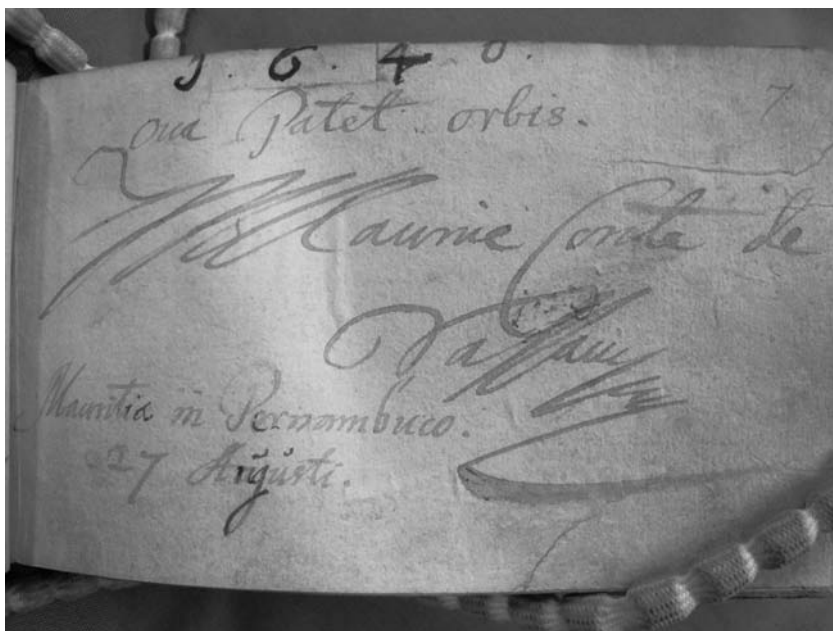


Fig. 1. *Inscription of Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen*, in Johann Philipp Mulheiser, *Album Amicorum*, 7 Aug. 1640. The Hague, Royal Library, KB ms. 129 F 6, fol. 7r.

north. Passing through Frederikstad in Paraíba, Mulheiser and his company eventually ended up in Fort Ceulen, on the Rio Grande, where he would remain for fifteen months. The social scene here was much less vibrant than in Recife. The number of soldiers in Fort Ceulen probably did not exceed one hundred, and the period Mulheiser spent here produced as little as eleven inscriptions. A soldier's life in a desolate place far away from home inevitably also led to camaraderie. Several of Mulheiser's closest colleagues had become friends by the time they wrote their goodbyes in his album. The inscription of undistinguished soldiers or lower officers like Andries von Merheim, in Fort Ceulen, and Cornelis Coorne, after returning to the United Provinces, indicated that in Brazil – despite the regular brawls – close friendships could also be forged.¹⁰ Johann Philipp Mulheiser must by all accounts have been an educated and respected man. The entries in his album

¹⁰ KB, ms. 129 F 6, f163r (Von Merheim; 'meinen guten freundt'); f153v (Coorne; 'Ad perpetuam memoriam amico suo').

are written in a variety of languages, from Greek to Dutch, and from Portuguese to Hebrew. The ordinary inscriptions of Mulheiser's comrades further point to a use of different vernacular languages in the ranks of the West India Company, and the high number of entries in English is remarkable.

Treason

One theme in the forefront of the officers' minds was treason. In the early 1630s the Dutch had profited from the unrivalled knowledge of local conditions and terrain of the mulatto Domingos Fernandes Calabar, which had allowed them to expand their sphere of influence beyond the immediate surroundings of Recife. Several times more, the Dutch obtained sensitive information directly from the enemy. But the presence of many Portuguese sugar planters in Dutch Brazil required a permanent state of vigilance. When in 1645 the *moradores* began their long and ultimately successful revolt against the regime of the West India Company, the Dutch major Diederick van Hoogstraten proved to be just as capable of disloyalty as Calabar thirteen years earlier. As commander of the strategic Fort van der Dussen at Cape Santo Agostinho, Van Hoogstraten was promised a high post in the Portuguese army if he surrendered the bastion. After secret negotiations with the leadership in Bahia, the officer decided to take up the offer and switched sides. The fall of Cape Santo Agostinho, after a token resistance, suddenly opened the route for the Portuguese to Recife, and severely weakened the position of the Dutch. Retrospectively, Van Hoogstraten's treachery heralded the collapse of the Dutch presence in Brazil.¹¹

While Peter Hansen Hajstrup encountered plenty of double agents on his campaigns, he did not mention the surrender of Fort van der Dussen, but the two printed descriptions of Brazil did. Almost as a way of helping readers to come to terms with adversity and the eventual loss of Brazil, Mattheus van den Broeck and Johan Nieuhof pointed the finger at Van Hoogstraten. Nieuhof, with the benefit of hindsight, devoted a number of pages to the Portuguese manoeuvres to test the Dutch major's loyalty. He stressed the active role of both Lisbon and

¹¹ Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil* 167–171.

Bahia in these ploys, as the Portuguese government was officially bound to the truce they had concluded with the Dutch in 1641. Perceived support in the highest political circles enabled authors like Nieuhof to lament the treacherous nature of the enemy, a type of rhetoric familiar to the readership in the United Provinces. Other examples of the enemy's unreliability – Nieuhof used the word 'tyranny' in an attempt to tap into trusted anti-Iberian sentiments – included the murder of dozens of Brazilians allied to the Dutch, even though the articles of capitulation guaranteed their safety. In short, Nieuhof and others strongly bemoaned the loss of Cape Santo Agostinho. The fortress had been supplied with many men, and the enemy, according to Nieuhof, could have had no realistic hope of surprising the defensive forces, until 'one person, made into a man by the West India Company, betrayed the fortress to the Portuguese, against his honour and vows'.¹²

The freeman Van den Broeck, who had served his time in the army since arriving in 1636 and had settled in Brazil, provided details about Van Hoogstraten's decision to defect.¹³ After the beginning of the Portuguese revolt, freemen like Van den Broeck were asked to take up arms again, and serve in separate regiments to support the Dutch cause. In 1645 his unit was located in the vicinity of Fort van der Dussen, and after he was made captive by the Portuguese in a battle for a large sugar plantation, he encountered several Dutch eye-witnesses to the betrayal. As a result, Van den Broeck could report that Van Hoogstraten had discussed the Portuguese offer with his fellow officers. Of the nine officers debating the matter, only three expressed their desire to fight until the last man. According to the loyalists, there was no shortage of men or victuals, and the battle could have been continued for quite some time. The other six, led by Van Hoogstraten, tabled their personal considerations before sacrificing the common good for their private objectives. *Ritmeester* Casper van der Ley, bearing in mind his sugar mill and the lives of his (Portuguese) wife and children, considered further resistance 'inconvenient'. Captain Albert Gerritsz Wedda was prepared to accept the enemy's conditions, since he did not want to lose his personal possessions at Cape Santo Ago-

¹² Nieuhof, *Gedenckweerdige Brasiliaense zee- en lantreiz* 96–97, 121–26. Quotation on p. 126: 'In dezer voegen wiert dat fort door eenen perzoon, die by de Compagnie, tot een man gemaect was, tegen eer en eet aen de Portugesen verraden'.

¹³ For a brief biography of Van den Broeck: Balen M., *Beschryvinge der stad Dordrecht* (Dordrecht, Simon onder de Linde: 1677) 887.

stinho for the sake of the Company, which he knew would not compensate him. Lieutenant Wenzel Smit was even blunter: he was fed up with the West India Company, and just wanted to go home.¹⁴

Despite the author's subsequent, arguably more dramatic, account of his captivity and his painful journey on foot to Salvador, Gerrit van Goedesberg, the Amsterdam publisher of Van den Broeck's *Journal* [Fig. 2], opted to introduce treason as the main theme in his introduction to readers. The bookseller began by emphasizing the author's effort to meticulously describe Portuguese vices and deceit under the cloak of friendship. He stated that Van den Broeck exposed 'the gruesome nature of faithless trucebreakers, among whom the King of Portugal must be regarded as one of the most prominent' in order to warn the 'attentive Hollander' how such betrayals should be guarded against in the future.¹⁵ This, according to Van Goedesberg in 1651, had been the objective of both publisher and author when preparing the text for the press. The first words of the account proper, supposedly written by Van den Broeck but much more outspoken than the rest of the narrative, confirmed the focus of the publication:

The principles of treason in Pernambuco appear to have been clearly practised in the Bay of All Saints, and without any doubt implemented with the knowledge of the King of Portugal, with his envoys who arrived in Pernambuco as ambassadors of alliance and friendship.¹⁶

On several points, an Amsterdam bookseller thus moulded the personal memories of Van den Broeck into an attractive publication with a clear motivation, a common practice in the early modern publishing industry.¹⁷ It is conceivable that by the time Nieuwhof's book appeared in 1682, the Portuguese plan to obtain Van Hoogstraten's meek surrender had become such an intricate part of the Dutch representations

¹⁴ Broeck M. van den, *Journal, ofte Historiæse Beschrijvinge van Matheus van den Broeck* (Amsterdam, Gerrit van Goedesberg: 1651) 17.

¹⁵ Ibid., fol. [*2v]: '...den gruwelijken aart der Trouweloose verbond-breckers, waar onder den Konink van Portugaal wel een van de voornaamste mag getelt worden, zeer levendig ten toon stelt, op dat zich den Wakkeren Hollander, [...] in het toekomende [...]'.
¹⁶ Ibid., 1: 'De Beginselen van de verraderye in Pharnambuco schijnen klaerlijk gepractiseert en zijn in de Bahia de Todos os Sanctos, ende sonder eenighe twijffel met kennisse van den Coninck van Portugael in 't werck gestelt, met hare gesanten die in Pharnambuco quamen als Ambassadeurs van Aliantie ende vriendschap'.

¹⁷ For a more detailed analysis of a publisher's influence on travel accounts, see Groesen M. van, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634)* (Leiden-Boston: 2008).

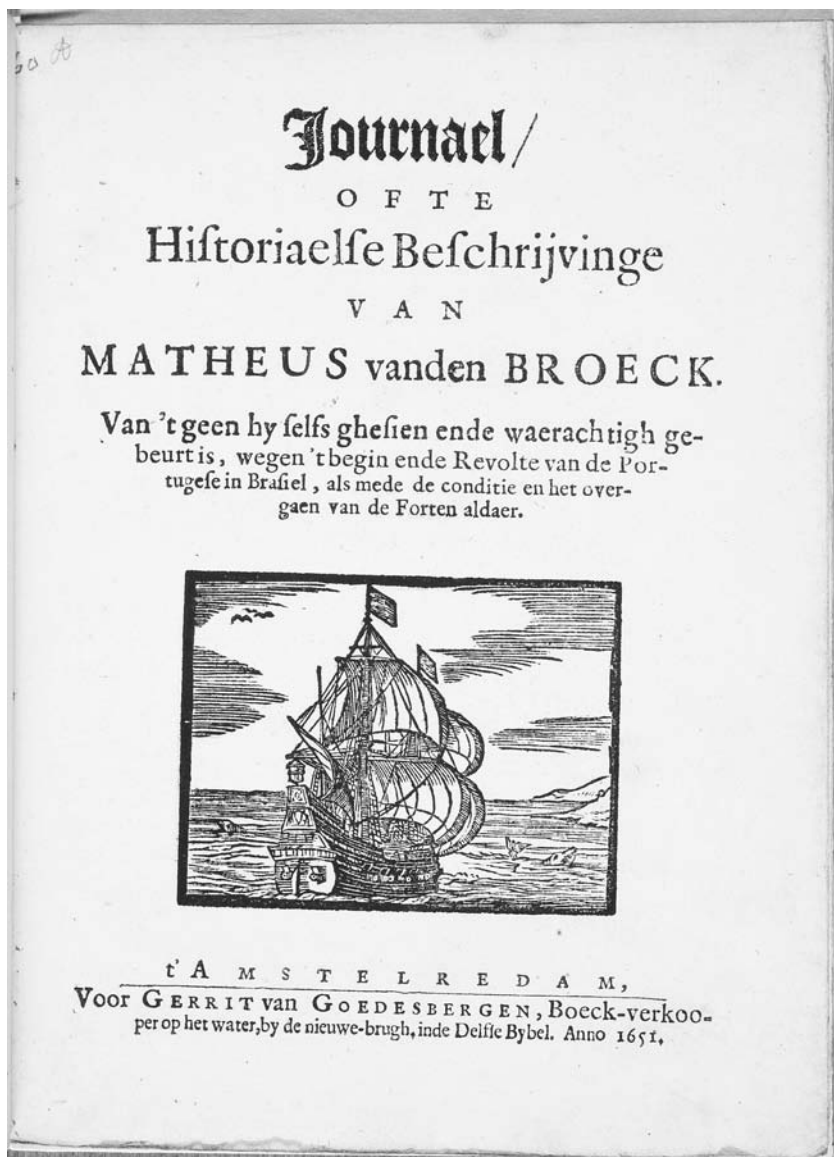


Fig. 2. Title page of Mattheus van den Broeck, *Journael, ofte Historiaelse Beschrijvinge* (Amsterdam, Gerrit van Goedesberg; 1651). Amsterdam, Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum.

of Brazil that here, too, the episode was given further emphasis in the publisher's workshop.

Certainly the story of Van Hoogstraten's treason – whether or not coördinated by Lisbon as publishers and some authors insisted – had an influence on the public opinion of Brazil in the United Provinces, as proved by two inscriptions in Johann Philipp Mulheiser's *album amicorum*. In 1642, in New Holland, Mulheiser had collected the signature of Major Van Hoogstraten, then still a loyal employee of the West India Company. Like so many other contributors, Van Hoogstraten had written a short poem, which ironically enough warned against speaking with a double tongue. Eight years later, when the major had been exposed as a turncoat and the German officer had settled in Dordrecht, Mulheiser met the local painter Samuel van Hoogstraten who also left his name in the same album, on the opposite page. Samuel, a pupil of Rembrandt, was distantly related to Diederick, and was quick to dissociate himself from this relative. Just as Judas had been one of the apostles, but carried the reputation of a traitor, Samuel wrote, this conspirator carried the name of his own god-fearing father.¹⁸ The subject of treason in Dutch Brazil, emphasized in several published accounts, had evidently been digested by the wider public at home.

Back Home: Distributing Knowledge of Brazil

The revolt of the Portuguese planters complicated matters in the Dutch colony, and considerable reinforcements arrived in the following years. As the conflict reached a climax in 1648, the Company had some 5,000 officers and soldiers on the books, not including indigenous Tapuya allies who loathed the Portuguese and supported the Dutch regime.¹⁹ Although they outnumbered the Luso-Brazilian forces, the

¹⁸ KB, ms. 129 F 6, fol. 240r (Diederick van Hoogstraten); fol. 239v (Samuel van Hoogstraten): 'Op de naam van de volgende. Zoo Iudas als Apostel heene treet / En draagt die naam d'onsaligen Verrader / Zoo voert dees oock (oh leefd' hij 't waar hem leet) / Den eijge naam van mijn Godvruchte Vader / Maar Iesus self, dat liefelykste woort / Betekent wel temet een Wangeboort'. Elsewhere in Mulheiser's album, Samuel van Hoogstraten left an allegorical drawing including the Hoogstraten family crest (fol. 294v–295r).

¹⁹ On the alliance with the Tapuyas: Boogaart E. van den, "Infernal allies. The Dutch West India Company and the Tarairiu", in Boogaart E. van den, *et al.* (eds.), *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, 1604–1679: a Humanist Prince in Europe and Brazil* (The Hague: 1979) 519–538.

Company lost two decisive battles near Guararapes in the late 1640s, and by the end of the decade, more than a thousand soldiers had died from injuries or disease. Others had simply deserted or had settled as freemen in the colony, far away from the hardships of war. Of the remaining troops, almost one in eight was physically unable to fight.²⁰ Hence, for various reasons, a significant percentage of Dutch forces in Brazil would not be able to relate their experiences in the colony, making the oral and, more critically, the written accounts of those who did more vulnerable to some of the predetermined agendas at home – either for reasons of propaganda or for commerce.

The editorial adjustments made to Van den Broeck's account by an Amsterdam publisher indicate that the nature and distribution of knowledge could be conditioned by parties in both the colony and the mother country. Buying printed narratives was only one of many ways available to the interested public of obtaining information on Brazil. Letters, *corantos*, pamphlets, and stories of soldiers and others who had returned from Pernambuco must have accounted for the bulk of colonial reporting. Several towns in the Dutch Republic, like Dordrecht, hosted small expatriate communities of Europeans and their Brazilian spouses who had been forced to leave the colony after the Portuguese takeover in 1654.²¹ Claims for the compensation of lost property at the offices of the Company and the States-General continued to make the headlines for several years. Corporal Peter Hansen Hajstrup was one of numerous officers who had to travel between Amsterdam and The Hague after his return to receive payment.²²

Given the social and ethnic diversity of the Company's personnel in Brazil, oral reports on life in the colony must have reached all layers

²⁰ Jacobs, "Soldaten van de Compagnie" 134.

²¹ The best example is the former High Council Gisbert de With and his wife Anna Paes, the daughter of a Portuguese sugar planter who lived in Dordrecht and The Hague. For an analysis of the Dutch capitulation and its aftermath: Cabral de Mello E., *De Braziliaanse affaire. Portugal, de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden en Noord-Oost Brazilië, 1641–1669* (Zutphen: 2005 [transl. of *O negócio do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: 1998)]) 120–121, and passim. Not all wedded couples left Brazil after 1654: Gonsalves de Mello J.A., *Nederlanders in Brazilië (1624–1654). De invloed van de Hollandse bezetting op het leven en de cultuur in Noord-Brazilië* (Zutphen: 2001) [transl. of *Tempo dos Flamengos* (Rio de Janeiro: 1947)] 144–45. See also: Hulsman L., "Brazilian Indians in the Dutch Republic. The remonstrances of Antonio Paraupaba to the States General in 1654 and 1656", *Itinerario* 29, 1 (2005) 51–78.

²² Ibold – Jäger – Kraack, *Das Memorial und Jurenal des Peter Hansen Hajstrup* 121.

of society inside and outside the United Provinces. It is difficult to trace what someone like Peter Hansen told his relatives in Flensburg in addition to his written *Memorial* or to recover the personal memories of a commander like Matthias van Ceulen. At least Johann Philipp Mulheiser's *album amicorum* gives an impression of the network of friends and relatives of the ensign when he returned to Europe with the fleet of Johan Maurits in the summer of 1644. Some of the contributors to his album in subsequent years – and Mulheiser continued to use it until the late 1670s – directly referred to the owner's past in the West, indicating that the ensign's personal experiences and memories of Brazil remained a subject of conversation.

The first three or four years after returning from Brazil constitute the period when Mulheiser used his album most actively, and the hundreds of contributors in the United Provinces allow for an analysis of the personal network of the officer from the Palatinate. In the first months after his return, Mulheiser visited all the major cities in Zeeland and Holland, indicating both a sense of uprootedness and an ambition to quickly reintegrate into Dutch society. Among the leading ministers of the two provinces, Mulheiser's former professors at Leiden University, and other elite connections several names stand out in relation to the distribution of knowledge about Dutch Brazil. During a four-day visit to Amsterdam in October 1644, Mulheiser made the acquaintance not only of Gerardus Vossius, professor at the city's *Athenaeum Illustre*, and his son Isaac, the promising philologist, but also of Caspar Barlaeus. Barlaeus, the other professor at the Athenaeum, was on the verge of beginning his project to describe Johan Maurits' reign in the colony, *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia*, which since its appearance in 1647 has remained one of the most important sources on the history of New Holland.²³ Mulheiser and Barlaeus must have discussed the ensign's experiences in the colony.

Cornelis Golijath, who was soon to return to Brazil and later acquired a reputation as the colony's official cartographer, supplied a Spanish inscription to Mulheiser's album in December 1644, reflecting on the

²³ KB ms. 129 F 6, fol. 128r (Gerardus Vossius); fol. 175v (Isaac Vossius); fol. 129r (Barlaeus). See on Barlaeus and Brazil: Harmsen A.J.E., "Barlaeus' Description of the Dutch Colony in Brazil", in Martels Z. von (ed.), *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery and Observation in Travel Writing* (Leiden-Boston-Cologne: 1994) 158–169.

friendship they had built in the tropics.²⁴ Regents and dignitaries in The Hague, such as the pensionary Jacob Cats, the English diplomat William Boswell, and the Swedish envoy Harald Appelboom also met the German officer, ensuring the political elite's access to firsthand reports of life in Brazil.²⁵ Mulheiser even came in touch with the exiled nobility from the Palatinate. The daughters of the Elector Palatine and Winter-King Frederick V – Elisabeth, Louise Hollandina and Henriette Marie – all signed their compatriot's album.²⁶ Another of Mulheiser's influential contacts was Constantijn L'Empereur van Opwijck, professor of theology in Leiden, and, more importantly for the ensign, counselor to Johan Maurits after his return to Europe.²⁷ When Mulheiser had settled down in Dordrecht, working at the city's Latin School, he occasionally translated pamphlets from German into Dutch. The first such pamphlet of 1649 addressed matters related to Johan Maurits, then stadtholder in Cleves, and is an indication that Brazilian connections continued to furnish a literate officer like Mulheiser with potentially interesting assignments.²⁸

How Mulheiser managed to maintain his Brazilian network while living in Holland is unclear, but his personal belongings could have played a role in sustaining his reputation as a former officer in the West. One visitor in Dordrecht, in October 1654, added to his inscription that he had been to 'the museum of this album's owner'.²⁹ Even though this reference alone does not prove the existence of a *Wunderkammer*, it

²⁴ KB ms. 129 F 6, fol. 244v: 'Quem en Dios espera, nunca lhe falto. Esso scrivio por onra del valentissimo senior Guan Philippo Mulheuser fue Alferes dhu Comp. d'infanteria em Brasijl, y por camerade sua. Su Dereado Amigo Cornelio Golijat'. On Golijath's map of Brazil: Zandvliet K., "Johan Maurits and the cartography of Dutch Brazil, the South-West-passage and Chile", in Boogaart *et al.*, *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen* 502.

²⁵ KB ms. 129 F 6, fol. 15r (Cats); fol. 13v (Boswell); fol. 10r (Appelboom).

²⁶ KB ms. 129 F 6, fol. 3r (Elisabeth); fol. 4r (Louise Hollandina); fol. 5r (Henriette Marie).

²⁷ KB ms. 129 F 6, fol. 53r; Rooden P.Th. van, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century: Constantijn l'Empereur (1591–1648): Professor of Hebrew and Theology at Leiden* (Leiden etc.: 1989) 210–213.

²⁸ *Kort vertoogh In plaets van een Manifest. Waerom Sijn Cheurvorst: Doorluch: tot Brandenburg, eenige plaetsen in de Vorstendommen Gulick en Bergh in te nemen, bewogen en veroorsaecht geweest is* (Dordrecht, Abraham Andriesz.: 1651); see also: Groesen, "Van vaandrig in Brazilië tot dichter in Dordrecht", 204–205; on Johan Maurits' political manoeuvrings in the late 1640s and early 1650s, see Opgenoorth E., "Johan Maurits as the stadtholder of Cleves under the Elector of Brandenburg", in Boogaart *et al.*, *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen* 39–53.

²⁹ KB ms. 129 F 6, fol. 219r. The contributor was a certain Isaac Oppervelt, who concluded his entry with: 'Dordrecht in musaeo D. Possessoris'.

is not unlikely that Mulheiser had assembled some exotic memorabilia to back up his personal recollections of Brazil. American artefacts and naturalia had figured in private cabinets in the United Provinces in the early seventeenth century, and three decades of Dutch presence provided nearly unlimited access to 'archetypical' Brazilian objects. There is other evidence of the appeal of various rarities among the personnel of the Company. When Peter Hansen Hajstrup led a makeshift force of eight soldiers which successfully fended off a Portuguese attack along the Rio Grande, his captain rewarded him with a parrot – the quintessentially American bird – which Hansen took home.³⁰

During the last five years of his service in Brazil, Hansen had also acquired a young Tapuya slave, who followed his master to Europe after the West India Company had been defeated. Sadly, while accompanying the corporal on one of his travels by barge between The Hague and Amsterdam to secure Hansen's overdue Company payment, the boy wandered off and did not return, and one can only wonder about his fate.³¹ Such human reminders of Dutch domination over Brazil must have excited those who were fortunate enough to have connections with former soldiers or colonists. In Doesburg, Lieutenant Johan Bettinck also enjoyed the service of 'a black maid' who may have returned with him from Brazil.³² Although his presence in the colony is not documented, he must have served in the company of Colonel Hendrick van Hous, who suffered several defeats against the Portuguese rebels in the late 1640s. Bettinck listed the former colonel as one of his benefactors in the inventory he had drawn up in 1659, after the death of his (Portuguese or, more likely, Luso-Brazilian) wife Margarita de Malesarmes.³³

Bettinck's inventory demonstrates how tangible memories of Dutch Brazil were blended into a veteran's household. Alongside West India Company bonds, Bettinck and his wife possessed several items made of brazilwood, not necessarily the direct result of an officer's tour in Brazil, but certainly the fruits of an acquired taste. In one of the bedrooms on the first floor of the sizeable house in Doesburg, a table made of

³⁰ Ibold – Jäger – Kraack, *Das Memorial und Jurenal des Peter Hansen Hajstrup* 90.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

³² *Oud Archief Doesburg*, inv. nr. 824 ('Verbalen van de hoofdschatting + restanten 1653') nr. 185. I am grateful to Hester Dibbits for informing me about this document.

³³ Dibbits H., *Vertrouwd bezit: materiële cultuur in Doesburg en Maassluis 1650–1800* (Nijmegen: 2001) 330–341.

brazilwood was covered by a Brazilian tablecloth. In the attic, the Bettincks had stored two hammocks and an old Brazilian straw basket, items almost certainly obtained in the New World. In the *voorstuk* or vestibule, the room which was most representative of the personal tastes of the residents, the Bettincks had found a place on the wall for a large map of Brazil alongside twelve busts of Roman emperors and four chairs of Spanish leather. This, then, was how the family liked to present itself to guests who, depending on their social status, were received here or passed through this room. The wall map was framed, according to the inventory, which gave it artistic value beside its obvious geographic application.³⁴ Visitors to the Bettinck household were no doubt impressed by the map, which presumably invited questions about life in the colony.

Matthias van Ceulen, a director of the West India Company who served four years in Brazil in two spells – the second time as member of the High and Secret Council under Johan Maurits – also left an inventory of his estate in May 1644.³⁵ Like the Bettincks, Van Ceulen presented his Brazilian credentials to visitors mostly in the *voorstuk* of his Amsterdam domicile. The walls of the vestibule in the Van Ceulen residence were adorned by two maps of Brazil, one of the area around Recife and one of the colony as a whole. In addition, there were several paintings in the *voorstuk* of which two – a large still life of West Indian fruits and a portrait of Johan Maurits – reminded visitors of the director's service in New Holland. In what is described as the large room (*grote kamer*) of his house, Van Ceulen exhibited another effigy of Johan Maurits, a testimony to his loyalty to the governor-general whose relations with the nineteen directors of the Company were not always impeccable. Arguably Van Ceulen's most treasured reminder was not on public display. His private office (*comptoir*) housed a wall map of Rio Grande, the estuary he had personally secured for the Company. This could be an indication that such allusions to personal achievements in Brazil were not intended for public reverence within the civic values of the Dutch Republic, in the same way that the highly

³⁴ See Zandvliet K., *Mapping for Money: Maps, Plans and Topographic Paintings and their Role in Dutch Overseas Expansion during the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Amsterdam: 2002) 249–252 for the decorative use of maps in the Dutch Golden Age.

³⁵ Gemeentearchief Amsterdam, NAA 1598, filmnr. 1691, ff. 303–336.

personal experiences of an officer like Peter Hansen were not available in printed Dutch accounts of Brazil.³⁶

The inventories of Bettinck and Van Ceulen highlight two patterns in the distribution of knowledge of Brazil in the United Provinces. Firstly officers – and, one presumes, others who had spent time in the colony – were not reluctant to share their experiences in Brazil with a wider audience, whether in the shape of (printed) narratives, indigenous artefacts or even people they had taken home, or memorabilia produced in Europe referring to the colony such as paintings and maps. Secondly, the social position of the officers had only little bearing on the way in which their experiences were reflected at home. While both Van Ceulen and Bettinck displayed maps of Brazil in their dwellings, the Amsterdam director owned several paintings of Brazil as well. Bettinck – who did possess other paintings – had assembled more mundane souvenirs such as a tablecloth, a straw basket and two hammocks, but his intentions to memorize and communicate his experiences were no different.

Likewise Johann Philipp Mulheiser and Mattheus van den Broeck held higher ranks in the army than Peter Hansen Hajstrup – and in the case of Van den Broeck, this may have influenced the appeal of his narrative to publishers – but their experiences were to a large extent interchangeable. Van den Broeck's ordeals after falling into enemy hands, for example, were comparable to Hansen's fears when being pursued by Portuguese troops. The events of the revolt in Brazil further reduced social inequalities. The main difference, then, between the published account by Van den Broeck and the diary of Peter Hansen lies in their respective readerships. It is uncertain whether Hansen's stories of internal scraps between the soldiers would have survived the editorial regime of a publisher, who in the case of Van den Broeck's account chose to emphasize the role of the Portuguese as trucebreakers and hence stressed Major Van Hoogstraten's treason. The differences in intended audience also may have conditioned the placing of artefacts in an officer's private house. Maps and paintings of Brazil were on public display, but more simple artefacts were not, and testimonies of private achievements were available to only a few selected visitors.

³⁶ Schama S., *The Embarrassment of Riches: an Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: 1987).

Dutch interest in Brazil continued until well after the West India Company surrendered Recife to the Portuguese in 1654. The Amsterdam publisher Jacob van Meurs, active as engraver and bookseller from the early 1650s onwards, issued many luxurious works of Dutch expansion abroad, and in 1682, his widow published Johan Nieuhof's *Gedenkwaardige Brasiliaense zee- en lantreiße*, a rather official chronicle of the colony in the 1640s. After diplomatic and financial matters regarding the colony had been settled with Portugal, however, the Brazilian enterprise gradually disappeared into the background.³⁷ Some veterans, like Mattheus van den Broeck and Johan Nieuhof, joined the Dutch East India Company, and both spent the longest and most illustrious parts of their careers in Asia. Others, like Peter Hansen, Johan Bettinck, and Johann Philipp Mulheiser, opted for quieter lifestyles in Europe. But occasionally the men rekindled their Brazilian past. One such day was 18 December 1670, when Van den Broeck, having returned from Asia as a successful admiral, visited Mulheiser in his house in Dordrecht. In Mulheiser's album, still in use after so many years, Van den Broeck professed that 'vigilance is the mother of good adventure'.³⁸ Despite their efforts to distribute knowledge of Brazil to armchair travelers in the Dutch Republic, this was a sentiment that only two veterans could share.

³⁷ Cabral de Mello, *De Braziliaanse affaire*, describes the diplomatic settlement of the Luso-Dutch rivalry over Brazil.

³⁸ KB ms. 129 F 6, fol. 352r: 'La vicalancia es la madre de bona vintura'.

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THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT.
EMBODIED COGNITION AND PERCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE
IN MARIA SIBYLLA MERIAN'S *METAMORPHOSIS*
*INSECTORUM SURINAMENSIIUM**

Julie Berger Hochstrasser

The strands that drew Anna Maria Sibylla Merian to her fateful and important work in Suriname were many and entangled, but they all trace back to the great network of the Dutch trading companies. When she left her husband and joined the Labadist community in Wieuwerd, Friesland in 1685, she took up residence on property that had been donated to the religious sect by three sisters of Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck – the noble who just two years earlier had become governor of the colony of Suriname. Five years later, with the community at Wieuwerd dissolving and her mother passed away, Merian moved to Amsterdam; throughout these peregrinations she had persevered with the studies of insects she had begun years ago as a girl in her native Frankfurt, amplified now by visits to tropical specimens in the collections of the anatomical professor Frederik Ruysch, Amsterdam's mayor Nicolaas Witsen (who was also a director of the Dutch East India Company), and town secretary Jonas Witsen (who owned three plantations in Suriname). In Amsterdam Maria's older daughter, Johanna Helena, married Jacob Herolt, whom she had met among the Labadists; he too became involved in trade with Suriname, where the couple would later reside as he administered the orphanage in Paramaribo. In 1699, Maria herself ventured to the Wild Coast,

* My thanks to the organizers for convening the conference on The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks that occasioned this study, and particularly to Siegfried Huygen and Elmer Kolfin for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay. I am grateful also to Andy Di Sessa and the Dialectical Cognition group at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University for introducing me to embodied cognition; to Teresa Mangum for arranging a presentation of this material to the Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Studies Group at the University of Iowa with both Carrie Figdor from philosophy and Alvin Snider from Comparative Literature as respondents; and to Pamela Smith at Columbia University for reading and remarking on the draft.

at the age of 52, accompanied only by her younger daughter Dorothea Maria, taking up residence on the Labadist plantation La Providence (also given them by the Sommelsdijcks), to turn her studies to the metamorphoses of the insects of Suriname – the project through which she would make her most lasting contribution to the history of entomology. When mother and daughter set sail, it was on a West India Company ship, as was their return voyage two years later, when Maria, weak with malaria, had to cut short her studies in the tropics. But she would live to see the work published in 1705: *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium*, not her first but her greatest book, the grand volume that would stand as a milestone in the development of the natural sciences.¹

Knowledge itself was a vital commodity transferred along the sprawling networks of the Dutch trade routes; pictorial information about distant cultures was one sort marketed particularly successfully in increasingly lavish publications like Merian's, issuing forth from The Netherlands over the course of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth. For our purposes, we shall call that 'perceptual knowledge' – a mode of representation of information that was central to the

¹ For a facsimile of the German edition, see Merian M.S., *Das Insektenbuch: Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* (Frankfurt am Main – Leipzig: 1991). Her title page continues with this subtitle: *oder Verwandlung der Surinamischen Insekten, worin die surinamischen Raupen und Wurmer in allen ihren Verwandlungen nach dem Leben abgebildet sind und beschrieben werden und wobei sie auf die Gewächse, Blumen und Früchte gesetzt werden, auf denen sie gefunden wurden. Es werden hier auch Frösche, wundersame Kröten, Eidechsen, Schlangen, Spinnen und Ameisen gezeigt und erklärt, und alles wurde in Amerika nach dem Leben und in natürlicher Grösse gemalt und beschrieben von Maria Sibylla Merian* [or *Metamorphosis of Surinamese Insects*, in which the Surinamese caterpillars and worms are described and depicted with all their changes, each placed on the plants, flowers, and fruits on which they were found; in which also the generation of frogs, marvellous toads, lizards, snakes, spiders, and ants, are shown and explained, everything depicted and described in America after life and life-size by Maria Sibylla Merian]. All translations, here and throughout, are my own. For further facsimiles of original studies, see *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* (Amsterdam 1705): *based on original watercolours in the Library of Windsor Castle* (London: 1982); and *Maria Sibylla Merian: the St. Petersburg watercolours*, ed. E. Hollmann (Munich-New York: 2003). Ella Reitsma's catalogue for the major 2008 exhibition at the Rembrandthuis in Amsterdam and the Getty Museum in Malibu summarizes the extensive and growing literature on Merian, focusing her own contributions on discriminating between the hands of Merian and her daughters; see Reitsma E., *Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters: Women of Art and Science* (Zwolle: 2008). For a well-researched literary treatment of Merian's life in English, see Todd K., *Chrysalis: Maria Sibylla Merian and the Secrets of Metamorphosis* (Orlando: 2007). Natalie Zemon Davis's brief but important treatment of Merian introduced new archival material; see Davis N.Z., *Women on the margins: three seventeenth-century lives* (Cambridge: 1995).

establishment and development of fields as diverse as botany, zoology, geography, and anthropology, throughout the early modern period. Perceptual knowledge worked in many ways to profoundly expand horizons around the globe. What was its nature? How was it acquired? How did its unique properties inflect the transfer of meaning by its means? In what follows, we will draw from the work of historians and philosophers of science and cognition for some useful conceptual tools for apprehending this particular *perceptual* way in which the Dutch trading companies worked as knowledge networks.

Foremost among them is a theory that stands today at the cutting edge of cognitive science. Contemporary theories of 'embodied cognition' (also known in related forms as embedded or distributed cognition, or situated learning) favor first-hand experience over the cognitive effectiveness of book-learning. While illustrated texts disseminated intermediated content, the business of the trading companies was also generating a growing populace whose direct exposure through travel in their employ facilitated this more 'embedded' personal experience of other cultures (a truer sense of knowing, according to the theories of embodied cognition), and this not only to European eyes, but to a highly diverse population of voyagers from all corners of the world mobilized along these routes.

Only *right there* in the jungles of Suriname, the settlement on the northeast fringe of South America, could Merian have captured its own unique and bizarre little creatures alive, so as to rear them patiently through their successive life cycles to the distinctive tropical species of moths and butterflies that emerged from their pupae, recording her findings in the intricately detailed illustrations that achieved such a remarkable union of science and art. Only through this work in the field could she have made the signal contributions that she did to the nascent science of entomology, documenting so many new species, exactly what they ate, and how they developed – and in the process, effectively disproving the old Aristotelian notion of spontaneous generation.² Even apart from the paucity of any prior published

² 'Merian raises the portrayal of insects to a great art.' See Freedberg D., "Science, Commerce, and Art: Neglected Topics at the Junction of History and Art History", in Freedberg D. – Vries J. de (eds.), *Art in History / History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture* (Santa Monica: 1991) 377–428; 382. Her careful empiricism debunked once and for all Aristotle's theory of the spontaneous generation of insects, which Jan Swammerdam too had first begun to question only some thirty years earlier in his *Historia Insectorum Generalis* (The Natural History of Insects) published in 1669. On

information from this new frontier, had she settled for rendering the static specimens in the Amsterdam collections, she would never have engaged with the living creatures that revealed their truths to her in that ‘hot, wet land’ of the ‘Wild Coast’.³

No other example is more dramatic in the clarity of its demonstration of the vital intersection of embodied cognition and resultant perceptual knowledge facilitated by the Dutch trade routes in the seventeenth century. Through analysis of Merian’s patient observations of caterpillar and chrysalis, we can make our way toward articulating some of the principles that govern this complex process under our own minute investigation, the embodied acquisition of perceptual knowledge, so as to better apprehend its implications.

Networks: Accumulate!

The crucial role of sprawling networks in the advancement of European knowledge has been recognized in recent scholarship. In *The Science of Describing*, Brian Ogilvie tracks the ways in which the very genesis of the sciences in early modern Europe was fostered by a network – the likes of what Benedict Anderson has so famously called an ‘imagined community’: ‘Travel and correspondence bound Renaissance naturalists into an international community that extended, and to some extent transcended, the concerns of their particular local groups. [...] the international community might best be conceived as a network; local groups were connected, through one or several of their members, to one or more nodes in a wide-flung net’.⁴ The extraordinary

Swammerdam see Ruestow E., ‘Piety and the defense of natural order: Swammerdam on generation’, in Osler M. – Farber P.L. (eds.), *Religion, Science, and Worldview: Essays in Honor of Richard S. Westfall* (New York: 1985) 217–241; also Ruestow E., *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic: The Shaping of Discovery* (New York: 1996).

³ Merian, *Metamorphosis* 8, also quoted in Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian* 169.

⁴ Ogilvie B., *The Science of Describing: Natural History in Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: 2006) 82. The notion of a true community of intellectual interests was signalled by their use of the Latin *studium*, which still carried the Ciceronian connotation of devotion, in the habitual sign-off among the correspondents: *tui studiosissimus* best translates (Ogilvie) as ‘yours devotedly’. (54). He recounts how ‘over the course of little more than a century, natural history developed out of medical humanism into a distinct scholarly discipline, practiced by a self-identified group of naturalists, most of whom were tightly integrated into local communities of naturalists centred on universities or courts; those communities, in turn, were closely connected through correspondence

outpouring of publication projects in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries helped in turn to relay this new information throughout these networks, as Harold Cook has richly documented in his aptly titled *Matters of Exchange* – going right to the heart of the commercial impetus for this advancement of natural knowledge occasioned by the Dutch trading companies.⁵

The sum total of it all was a veritable catalogue of the known world, an assemblage quite astonishing for its sheer *content*; but it is Bruno Latour who has sought to unpack the *process* whereby ‘data’ was accumulated, and thence transformed, into ‘knowledge’.⁶ Latour’s argument is about epistemology: analyzing the ways ‘inscriptions are gathered,

and travel’ (85). This early network, however, had no particular center, as would the seventeenth-century ones that were to give birth to Europe’s first scientific societies. In The Netherlands, Dodonaeus, Lobelius, and Clusius were only the best known of many participants in the Republic of Letters conceived by Francis Bacon and later Pierre Bayle (83). And a host of skilled hands preceded Merian in the rendering of accomplished nature studies: the 2008 Merian exhibition at the Rembrandt House in Amsterdam and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles displayed excellent exemplars by Schongauer, Dürer, Hans Hoffmann, Georg Flegel, Jacques le Moyne de Morgues, Johann Walther (who did a flower book for Count Johann of Nassau-Idstein on which Merian probably worked as his assistant), Emmanuel Sweerts, Joris Hoefnagel and Georg Bockskay, Crispijn van de Passe II, Hans Simon Holtzbecker, Jan van Kessel, Johann and Theodor de Bry, Jacob Hoefnagel (son of Joris), and her own stepfather, who probably served as her teacher, Jakob Marrel.

⁵ See Cook H.J., *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: 2007). The twelve large volumes of Hendrik van Reede tot Drakenstein’s epic *Hortus Malabaricus*, published between 1673 and 1703 and containing more than 600 plates, the Swede Linnaeus’ *Hortus Cliffortianus* of 1737, and the posthumous publication of the *Amboinsche Kruid-Boeck* by the ‘Pliny of the Indies,’ Georg Rumphius, finally between 1741–55, stand out along with Merian’s 1705 *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* as prime products that depended for their development upon the trade network that thrived throughout this period. Precedents within South America included Caspar Van Baerle’s *Rerum per Octennium*, and the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, first published by Willem Piso, Johannes De Laet and Georg Marcgraf in 1648, which Merian mentions specifically in her own book. Ten years later a new version of the *Historia* was released, with 14 books on the natural and medical history of both Indies. On America particularly see also Freedberg, “Science, Commerce and Art” 384. Freedberg comments that ‘the nexus between trade, America, art, and the advancement of natural history deserves deeper investigation than it has received so far’ (387), which still holds true. Freedberg’s own later study focused on the Italian Cesi and the Lincean studies, which also extend to hundreds of richly illustrated pages. See Freedberg D., *The Eye of the Lynx: Galileo, his Friends, and the Beginnings of Modern Natural History* (Chicago: 2002).

⁶ Although, as Latour emphasizes, one should never speak of ‘data’ – what is given – but rather of ‘sublata’ – that is, of achievements. Latour B., *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: 1999) 19.

combined, tied together and sent back' to the critical centers where they all become – through this process and only through this process – 'knowledge'. But his analysis is also fundamentally political, working persuasively to undermine the staunch presumptions of Western scientific superiority: wryly we discover that his subtitle 'domestication of the savage mind' refers ironically to the European one, hopelessly ignorant of the geography of a foreign locale, utterly dependent upon the locals for information.⁷

Latour's analysis is healthy cultural work that needed doing. His argument cleverly unmasks the process whereby foreign observers (Captain Lapérouse stands in for the whole European engine of exploration) moved only gradually beyond that position of weakness ('the foreigner will always be weaker than any one of the peoples, of the lands, of the climates, of the reefs, he meets around the world, always at their mercy') to a position of greater strength – by *amassing* 'knowledge'.⁸

No, he will gain an edge only if the other navigators have found a way to *bring* the lands *back with them* in such a manner that he will *see* Sakhalin island, for the first time, at leisure, in his own home, or in the Admiralty office, while smoking his pipe... As we see, what is called 'knowledge' cannot be defined without understanding what *gaining* knowledge means. [...] how to bring things back to a place for someone to see it for the first time so that others might be sent again to bring other things back. How to be familiar with things, people and events, which are *distant*.⁹

⁷ Latour is today a sociologist by trade, but was trained in analytical philosophy. In eminently equitable creative reversals, he highlights the totally conditional status of any supposed 'logic': Evans-Pritchard goes to Africa, the Zande anthropologist goes to England, and both their observations of the 'Other' culture are revealed as equally nonsensical from their respective points of view. See Latour B., "The trials of rationality" in chapter 5, "Tribunals of Reason", in *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, MA: 1987) 180–195.

⁸ Latour, *Science in Action* 219. He opens his chapter entitled "Centres of Calculation" with a prologue entitled "The domestication of the savage mind": in 1787, the French ship *L'Astrolabe* lands on Sakhalin in the East Pacific, where Captain Lapérouse is to find out (for King Louis XVI) whether it is an island or a peninsula. That no one back in Europe knew the answer to this particular geographical question at the time (not even the renowned mapmakers of The Netherlands) is Latour's demonstration of the position of relative weakness from which, he wishes to remind us, all European explorers began. This is the kind of 'science *in action* and not ready made science or technology' that Latour is after: *before* facts are 'blackboxed' into pre-assumed scientific knowledge – or we follow the controversies that reopen them.' Latour, *Science in Action* 258.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 220.

Here is where perceptual knowledge enters (quite literally) the picture, for *visual* representations were perfectly suited to this task. They could subject all this information to assembly into more centralized, systematized form.¹⁰ And this is precisely the project that so preoccupied the European observers of the many worlds beyond their shores, driving hard to assimilate it all into some coherence throughout this period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹ In order to accumulate information on such a programmatic scale, Latour reasons, its elements must be rendered *mobile*, *stable*, and *combinable*; with this he breaks down the whole colonial enterprise into its most functional components – and note that visual imagery conveniently fulfills all three of these criteria.¹²

But Latour's sustained attention to the workings of this larger network came at the expense of the individual minds within it.¹³

¹⁰ The great cabinets of the late Renaissance were assembled in the attempt to accomplish a similar kind of microcosmic representation of the universe, albeit not yet in such systematic fashion. On early collections, see Schlosser J. von, *Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Spätrenaissance* (Leipzig: 1908). On the mental orders of representation posited as a development from the Renaissance's representations infused with resemblance to the drive for classification during the 'classical' period of the seventeenth century, see Foucault M., *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: 1970).

¹¹ But Latour dethrones the presumption that the centers retain any inherent superiority of intelligence. 'It is not at the cognitive difference that we should marvel, but at this general mobilization of the world that endows a few scientists in frock coats, somewhere in Kew Gardens, with the ability to *visually* dominate all the plants of the earth [*italics mine*]. Latour, *Science in Action* 225.

¹² Latour, *Science in Action* 228: 'Everything that might enhance either the mobility, or the stability, or the combinability of the elements will be welcomed and selected if it accelerates the accumulation cycle: a new printing press that increases the mobility and the reliable copying of texts: a new way to engrave by aquaforte more accurate plates inside scientific texts, a new projection system that allows maps to be drawn with less deformation of shape [...] When you hear someone say that he or she 'masters' a question better, meaning that his or her *mind* has enlarged, look first for inventions bearing on the mobility, immutability or versatility of the traces; and it is only later, if by some extraordinary chance, something is still unaccounted for, that you may turn towards the mind'.

¹³ And the final step in the process whereby all this accumulation generates knowledge: 'After having followed expeditions, collections and enquiries, and observed the setting up of new observatories, of new inscription devices and of new probes, we are now led back to the centres where these cycles started from; inside these centres, specimens, maps, diagrams, logs, questionnaires and paper forms of all sorts are accumulated and are used by scientists and engineers to escalate the proof race; every domain enters the 'sure path of a science' when its spokespersons have so many allies on their side. [...] This mobilization of everything that can possibly be inscribed and moved back and forth is the staple of technoscience and should be kept in mind if we want to understand what is going on inside the centres'. Latour, *Science in Action* 232–233.

What I propose, here, [...] is in effect a *moratorium* on cognitive explanations of science and technology! I'd be tempted to propose a ten-year moratorium. [...] Before attributing any special quality to the mind or to the method of people, let us examine first the many ways through which inscriptions are gathered, combined, tied together and sent back. Only if there is something unexplained once the networks have been studied shall we start to speak of cognitive factors.¹⁴

This challenge betrayed Latour's prejudice in the cognition wars that have waged around rival models for predominance. I am completely in accord with his radically even-handed assessment of the drastically divergent standards by which different cultural logics obtain in different contexts, but when it comes to considering of the role of cognition in the process of information acquisition and knowledge development, time is definitely up for that dramatic moratorium he proposed in 1987. It must be argued on the contrary that cognition is inevitably *also* in play, at any one of the thousands of nodes of the network. I am not arguing here for *special* cognitive abilities on the part of European 'scientists' (though Merian's exquisite studies confirm that hers surely became attuned at least as finely to the subtle modulations of color in a butterfly wing as Latour's Munsell color charts) – but rather for the role of individual cognition itself within the grand network: that it is by its very nature a phenomenon embedded in its environment.¹⁵ And this is precisely the new direction that cognitive science has taken in the meantime.

Embodied Cognition: Being There

My best pictures of Suriname are the ones I did not take. The Amerindian mothers, bare-breasted, waist-deep at the edge of the river, their babies on their hips – the real *National Geographic* shots – as we drifted with the current downstream and my gaze locked with theirs, I could not bring myself to lift the camera between us. Back in the dank stench of the market in Paramaribo, rats scuttled by too quickly into corners too dark to photograph, beyond the caged chickens, heaps of smelly fish, fresh blood from the pig slaughtered right there. And then there was all that pictures could not capture anyway: the stifling moist heat

¹⁴ Ibid., 247; 258.

¹⁵ On the Munsell color charts, see Latour, 'Circulating Reference', in *Pandora's Hope*.

and clinging scents of the jungle, the extraordinary cries of its birds and creatures I could not see to identify, but anyway had never heard before.

In retrospect, I regretted my restraint – surely there were other white visitors, academic or not, who had snapped shots of these women; how else had *National Geographic* photos become such a cliché? A white-skinned female floating down their river in a rented motorboat was conspicuously intrusive enough, whether or not I clicked the camera. Yet those pictures I didn't take have stayed with me even more vividly than the ones I did, perhaps because I know they live only in my memory. Those unrecorded bits clinch the part of travel that says 'you had to be there' – the sum total of sensory input and direct experience that even visual images cannot entirely capture. Visual images – both those in digital form and those that linger only in my brain – are the most dense and potent matrices of the knowledge I possess of Suriname today; but it is only within the context of my larger experience – having *been* in the country that Maria Sibylla Merian called 'that hot, wet land' – that they convey their fullest force.¹⁶

For me it is personal testimony to the validity of a new theory within the cognitive sciences for which Merian's work is also a powerful illustration. Cognitive psychology has recently arrived at a whole new model to conceptualize the way in which the brain processes knowledge – one that finally puts a name to that 'you had to be there' phenomenon so well known to every traveller. Dynamical systems theory, embodied cognition, situated learning: notwithstanding distinctions, its variants cohere in their opposition to the previously predominant means of understanding cognition as 'computational'. While the old model conceives of knowledge as happening inside the individual mind, in a form of input-output symbol processing rather like a computer, the 'dynamical' model emphasizes the interaction of mind with its larger (social and environmental) context.

The theory of embodied cognition is the most important development in the cognitive sciences in recent decades, fundamentally reconceptualizing the way we understand human mental processing. Its essential innovation is to acknowledge that such cognition occurs within a larger context, and its integration within that larger context is

¹⁶ Jacob Burckhardt called it 'Das Anschauliche' – immediate visual perception, or graphic vividness. See Burckhardt J., *The Philosophy of Art History* (New York: 1959).

fundamental to its very operation: knowledge is only acquired in interaction with the sum total of this more complex environment, which in turn inevitably determines the context of that knowledge. Merian's contributions to the natural sciences were precisely of this more complex *ecological* nature, as commentators have recently characterized them – that is, profoundly in dialogue with the total environment that surrounded her.¹⁷ At one level, the role of embodied cognition here seems so obvious as to be almost redundant: quite simply, in order to garner the discoveries Merian assembled, she *did* have to 'be there'. To capture the caterpillars and note which plants they were feeding on and raise them through their individual life cycles all demanded her presence in their own native milieu.

Merian's experience was precisely this, and her achievements directly dependent upon such sustained interaction over time with her immediate environment. Her findings about metamorphosis were, by definition, critically time-sensitive: the giant, colorful Wood-Boring Beetle drawn in her study book had begun as a large white larva she encountered in her garden in Suriname; within hours, she records, it had turned into this enormous insect. She contrasts it with a smaller Bess Beetle on the same page to emphasize its size, and the magic of the transformation she had seen before her very eyes is further underscored by the gold highlights she deploys to depict its iridescence. At the most basic level, the insights she brought to entomology depended upon the passage of time, upon the patient hours spent gathering, rearing, observing, drawing, painting, composing, compiling: the evolution of her own cognitive awareness of the natural processes under her minute focus could not have occurred in any other way, metamorphosing right along with the creatures she observed – just as the dynamical model of cognition conceives the process of knowledge formation.

As further confirmation of the decidedly situated nature of her cognition, the written descriptions that accompany her illustrations are laced with particular observations that could only be made in person. She notes the scents, the sounds, the very bodily encounters: sweet-smelling jasmine grew wild in Suriname and 'gave off such a

¹⁷ See Davis, *Women at the Margins*, and Todd K., *Chrysalis*; also remarked on wall plaques at the Getty exhibition.

strong fragrance that it can be smelled from a long way off"; elsewhere she writes that, as she works, wasps fly around her face. The text of her *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* makes repeated references to 'meinen Beobachtungen' (my observations), and the written descriptions are dense with the same careful observation she displays in her visual depictions. This description is typical in attending not only to the creature's physical characteristics, but also to where and when she found it, and the precise dates of the various stages of its metamorphosis:

The caterpillar that sits on this pineapple, I found in the grass by the pineapples at the beginning of May of the year 1700. It is light green and has a red and white stripe over the entire body. On the 10th of May it changed into a pupa, from which there hatched on 18th May a very beautiful butterfly, decorated with beautiful shining green flecks.¹⁸

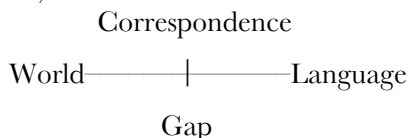
These records of specific timing are further evidence of her scientific care, besides being just the kind of observation that could not have been possible anywhere but in the presence of the living creatures. True, the text can specify exact periods of time that its illustration cannot; yet in turn, the picture displays some information more economically than words – how wide is the stripe? on top of the body, or down its side? – and some words simply could never adequately convey: What is the precise shape of the butterfly's wings? The pattern of those green flecks? No amount of verbal description could ever communicate the intricate complexity of their patterns, so meticulously recorded in Merian's image; this remains decidedly within the realm of perceptual knowledge.

¹⁸ Merian, *Metamorphosis* Plate II, 12: 'Die Raupe, die auf dieser Ananas sitzt, fand ich im Gras bei den Ananassen Anfang Mai des Jahres 1700. Sie ist hellgrün und hat einen rot-weißen Streifen über den ganzen Körper. Am 10. Mai verwandelte sie sich in eine Puppe, aus der am 18. Mai ein sehr schöner, mit schönen leuchtenden grünen Flecken verzierter Tagfalter herausschlüpfte, der einmal sitzend und einmal fliegend gezeigt wird'. Or again, Plate XIII, 35: 'The green and bristly caterpillars [...] do nothing all day but feed. On 5th April they were still, and fastened themselves. On the 7th they metamorphosed into pupae, from which on the 20th of the month such blue butterflies hatched'. 'Die grünen und stacheligen Raupen [...] tun den ganzen Tag lang nichts als fressen. Am 5. April waren sie still und machten sich fest. Am 7. Haben sie sich in Puppen verwandelt, aus denen am 20. des gleichen Monats solche blauen Tagfalter schlüpften'. Such examples multiply throughout the text.

Circulating Reference: Complexities of Representation

Twelve years after *Science in Action*, Latour's book *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the reality of science studies* does return to the question of cognition. He takes his inquiry very rightly into the field, where 'data' is actually gathered. His chapter on 'Circulating Reference' still emphasizes the network through which scientific information is accumulated, but he opens up the problem of the gap between world and language, presenting the following diagram for the acquisition of scientific information:

Diagram I (Latour's):



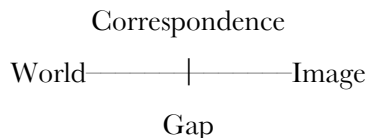
It was an important step to problematize that gap, though in doing so he invoked an unfortunate metaphor, one of particular concern for our analysis of perceptual knowledge. Silly us, says he: 'We have taken science for realist painting, imagining that it made an exact copy of the world.'¹⁹ Sciences do something else entirely, he protests: through successive stages, they link us to an aligned, transformed, constructed world.

But so do paintings! As every painter knows, or at least every art historian (Gombrich's paradigmatic analyses in *Art and Illusion* have made this eloquently clear), there is no such thing as a painter making an 'exact copy of the world' either – even the most 'realist' of painters.²⁰ In fact, I would propose an equally useful parallel theorem which is more to our purposes here, replacing *Language* in the right-hand term of the equation with *Image*:

¹⁹ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* 55–56.

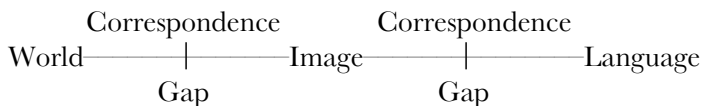
²⁰ Though that too is the wrong term, since he clearly intends none of the socio-political connotations of either Bruegel's dowdy 'realist' peasants or Courbet's programmatically radical 'Realism' with a capital 'R.' Clearly enough, what he means is *illusionistic* painting – but this revision still does not restore truth value to the claim.

Diagram II:



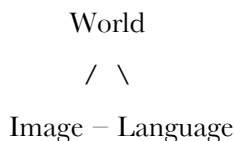
There is still much work to be done on this gap too, beyond Gombrich's pioneering formulations of 'making' and 'matching'.²¹ The transference from phenomenal world to visual image is just as complex, in its own quite distinctive ways, as the one that Latour posits from world to language. In fact, for the analysis of perceptual knowledge, the model could be expanded to include a further relationship, at least as vexing in its complexity, between images and language – even highly referential images usually described as illusionistic or, in Latour's rather misapprehended terminology, 'realist' – the type generated in the interest of natural science, say, such as Merian's illustrations.

Diagram III:



Or really the three terms, world, image, language, should be posited as points of a triangle, the triangulation between them being a dynamic process of its own (retaining still the correspondence/gap between each point).

Diagram IV:



²¹ See Gombrich E.H., *Art and Illusion: A Study on the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: 1961).

The third diagram already encapsulates a ‘chain of reference’ orders of magnitude yet more complex than the one Latour tackled – demanding its own ongoing study, which reaches far beyond the scope of this article. But it sets some terms for apprehending what we have here called ‘perceptual knowledge.’ And it is the circularity of the fourth that comes closest to articulating its ever dynamic motional *process*. For the basis of dynamical cognition is more complex than mere presence in the world. Developmental psychologist Esther Thelen clarifies its central claim:

To say that cognition is embodied means that it arises from bodily interactions with the world. From this point of view, cognition depends on the kinds of experiences that come from having a body with particular perceptual and motor capacities that are inseparably linked and that together form the matrix within which memory, emotion, language, and all other aspects of life are meshed.²²

What ‘dynamical’ cognition also succeeds in apprehending, unlike its ‘computational’ predecessor, is the constant state of flux involved in the process of cognition. ‘The heart of the problem is *time*. *Cognitive processes and their context unfold continuously and simultaneously in real time*.’²³ What Latour’s theory of ‘circulating reference’ had once characterized as relatively stable units of information passed along a chain are here seen as more fluid phenomena. ‘The cognitive system does not interact with other aspects of the world by passing messages or commands: rather, it continuously coevolves with them’.²⁴

²² She continues: ‘The contemporary notion of embodied cognition stands in contrast to the prevailing cognitivist stance which sees the mind as a device to manipulate symbols and is thus concerned with the formal rules and processes by which the symbols appropriately represent the world.’ Esther Thelen, in Thelen E. – Schoner G. – Scheier C. – Smith L.B., “The Dynamics of Embodiment: A Field Theory of Infant Preservative Reaching”, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 24 (2001) 1–8. See also Thelen E. – Smith L., *A Dynamic Systems Approach to the Development of Cognition and Action* (Cambridge, MA: 1994) and Thelen E., “Time-Scale Dynamics in the Development of an Embodied Cognition”, in Port R. – Van Gelder T. (eds.), *Mind in Motion* (Cambridge, MA: 1995).

²³ Computational models specify a discrete sequence of static internal states in arbitrary ‘step time.’ Port – Van Gelder, *Mind in Motion* 2.

²⁴ Ibid., 3. Some philosophers engaged with more elemental cognition will object to the application of the ‘embodied’ model to higher-level conscious thought processes (such as Merian’s observations), but humanists are doing so nonetheless; see for another example Robert Markley, “Monsoon Cultures: Climate and Acculturation in Alexander Hamilton’s *A New Account of the East Indies*”, *New Literary History* 38, 3 (2007) 527–550.

Embodied cognition turns the *inward* focus of the old computational model definitively *outward*, to encompass the environment in which a body functions; yet with this we do also shift radically from Latour's adamantly *external* theory of reference to incorporate (the term is doubly appropriate) *internal* processes as well.²⁵ Timothy van Gelder's 2001 summary of the dynamical systems theory of cognition outlines a paradigm that integrates an externally unfolding process (like Latour's repeatedly going and returning, gradually accumulating data) with the role of mind:

We know, at least, these very basic facts: that cognitive processes unfold in real time; that their behaviors are pervaded by *both* continuities and discreteness; that they are composed of multiple subsystems which are simultaneously active and interacting; that their distinctive kinds of structure and complexity are not present from the very first moment, but emerge over time; that cognitive processes operate over many time scales, and events at different time scales interact; and that they are embedded in a real body and environment.²⁶

Such were the rich observations that Merian's work in the jungles of Suriname achieved. The proofs of metamorphosis meticulously recorded in her texts and crystallized in her images were only achieved *over time*. Likewise, her written descriptions elaborate upon insect behaviors that could never have been dreamed up from the dried-up

²⁵ Restated, this new conception of the cognitive process goes as follows: 'The cognitive system does not interact with the body and the external world by means of periodic symbolic inputs and outputs; rather, inner and outer processes are coupled, so that both sets of processes are continually influencing each other'. Port – Van Gelder, *Mind in Motion* 13. Oddly, Latour clearly embraces a social model for how knowledge happens, which in turn sounds very much more like distributed cognition; and his cyclical diagram for the accumulation of knowledge decidedly posits a process of development for his European travellers 'going away', 'crossing other people's path', and 'coming back' with new bits of information. Latour, *Science in Action*, his Fig. 6.1, 220. In fact Latour's very formulation of science *in action* has a dynamical ring to it; and there are still other features of the dynamical model that sound strikingly compatible with Latour's exposition: 'Perhaps the most distinctive feature of dynamical systems theory is that it provides a *geometric* form of understanding: behaviors are thought of in terms of *locations, paths, and landscapes* in the phase space of the system'. (italics mine) Port – Van Gelder, *Mind in Motion* 14.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18. Van Gelder continues: 'The computational approach, by contrast, either ignores them entirely or handles them only in clumsy, ad hoc ways'. Perhaps the kind of cognition Latour was attempting so vehemently to veto with his moratorium was precisely the internal variety of the old school. Notwithstanding his self-proclaimed aversion to cognition, this newer model shares the orientation of his own, system-wide conception.

bodies mounted back in Amsterdam; clearly they too demanded her interactive presence to observe live creatures:

When the moths want to suck honey from the blossoms, they lay these double proboscises together, so that they form a little tube. So they suck their nourishment. After they have done this, they roll these back together, and lay them in the hair under their head, so that one can scarcely find them.²⁷

A more extensive verbal description incorporates whole narratives of activity that extend through time and space – impossible to extrapolate from isolated dead specimens.

The ants build a ‘cellar’ in the earth, fully eight feet high and so well formed that they seem as if they had been made by human hands. Whenever they want to go someplace where there’s no way to get there, they make a bridge. The first ant fixes himself and bites into the wood, the second sets himself behind the first and clamps himself fast to the other, the third does the same with the second, and the fourth with the third, and so forth. And then they let themselves be driven by the wind, until they are blown to the other side. Then all the thousands crawl over like crossing a bridge.²⁸

Once again, it is information she (or at the very least an informant) had to have gathered in the field, and over considerable time at that:

They come out of their mound once a year in a great horde. They come in the houses and run from one room to the other and suck dry all the animals, large and small. In Nu they consumed a great spider, for the ants fall in great mass all over the spider, so that it cannot save itself. Also they run from one room to the other, so that even the people have to retreat. When they have eaten the whole house bare, they go on to the next and then finally they return to their mound.²⁹

²⁷ Merian, *Metamorphosis* Plate III, 15: ‘Wenn die Falter Honig aus den Blüten saugen wollen, legen sie diesen Doppelrüssel zusammen, so daß daraus ein Röhrchen wird. So saugen sie ihre Nahrung auf. Nachdem sie dies getan haben, rollen sie ihren Rüssel dicht zusammen und legen ihn in das Haar unter den Kopf, so daß man ihn kaum finden kann’.

²⁸ Ibid., Plate XVIII, 44–47: ‘Die Ameisen bauen Keller in die Erde, reichlich acht Fuß hoch und so gut geformt, als ob sie von Menschenhand so gemacht worden wären. Wenn sie irgendwo hingehen wollen, wo es keinen Weg gibt, um hinzugelangen, so machen sie eine Brücke. Dabei setzt sich die erste Ameise fest und Beißt in Holz, die zweite setzt sich hinter die erste und klammert sich an dieser fest, ebenso die dritte an der zweiten und die vierte an der dritten und so weiter. Und dann lassen sie sich vom Wind treiben, bis sie auf die andere Seite geweht werden. Dann laufen alle die Tausende darüber wie über eine Brücke’.

²⁹ Ibid., Plate XVIII, 47: ‘Sie kommen jedes Jahr einmal in riesiger Menge aus ihren Kellern. Sie kommen in die Häuser und laufen von einem Raum in den anderen

But the striking visual image that accompanies this chilling account brings home a visceral quality to the nature of crawling things that even this evocative recital does not capture in quite the same way [Fig. 1].

Her references to indigenous uses of the plants and creatures she depicts offer yet more proof of her interaction with the broader milieu of the objects of her study. Of the Surinamese cotton tree, for instance, she mentions that '(t)he Indians lay the green leaves on fresh wounds, to cool and heal them', while her report of cocoons as chickenfeed includes nutritional considerations that would have had to be garnered in conversation: 'In Suriname they feed these pupae to the hens, and they're better for them than oats or barley'.³⁰ Merian had two Indian slaves whose assistance was central to her work; no doubt they served as native informants for detailed lore such as this. But the single most arresting entry in her Suriname book with regard to this colony so notorious for its harsh slave handling was by her own account gleaned in direct conversation with black Africans, attesting further to her interaction and conversation with the people around her, here regarding the uses of *Flos pavonis*, the Peacock flower:

Their seeds are used for women who have birth pains and who must keep working. The Indians who are not well treated by their masters when they are in the service of the Dutch abort their children with them [the seeds of this plant], so that their children will not become slaves like they are. The black slaves from Guinea and Angola must be handled very cautiously, for otherwise they will not want to have any children in their circumstance as slaves. They also have none, indeed they sometimes take their own lives because they are treated so badly, which one can grant them, because they believe they will be born again, free and living in their own land, so they have told me from their own mouths.³¹

und saugen alle Tiere aus, große und kleine. Im Nu haben sie eine große Spinne verzehrt, denn die Ameisen fallen in großen Mengen über die Spinne her, so daß sie sich nicht retten kann. Auch laufen sie von einem Raum zum anderen, so daß sich auch die Menschen zurückziehen müssen. Wenn das ganze Haus leergefressen ist, gehen sie in das nächste und dann schließlich wieder in ihren Keller'.

³⁰ Ibid., Plate XVIII, 44: 'Die grünen Blätter legen die Indianer auf frische Wunden, um diese zu kühlen und zu heilen', and Plate X, 28; 'Mit dieser Puppen füttert man in Surinam die Hühner, und sie sind besser für sie als Hafer oder Gerste'.

³¹ Ibid., Plate XLV, 99: 'Ihr Samen wird gebraucht für Frauen, die Geburtswehen haben und die weiterarbeiten sollen. Die Indianer, die nicht gut behandelt werden, wenn sie bei den Holländern im Dienst stehen, treiben damit ihre Kinder ab, damit ihre Kinder keine Sklaven werden, wie sie es sind. Die schwarzen Sklavinnen aus Guinea und Angola müssen sehr zuvorkommend behandelt werden, denn sonst wollen sie keine Kinder haben in ihrer Lage als Sklaven. Sie bekommen auch keine, ja



Fig. 1. P. Sluyter after Maria Sibylla Merian, *Guava Tree with Tarantulas and Leaf-cutter Ants*. Plate 18 from *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium*, 1719, hand-colored etching. Groningen, Groningen University Library.

Here she makes a point of her reliance upon reports from those around her, yet she is adamant too about her personal witness here. This one time, the words trump the picture, as compassion shows through the veneer of dispassionate observation.

Dialectical Cognition: from Reference to Inference

Latour's chapter on 'Circulating Reference' argues for an *external* theory of reference: external, that is, to individual cognitive processes, still focusing its emphasis instead upon the role of the *network* through which scientific information is accumulated rather than the internal processes of the *individuals* who comprise it. But, like Merian's still images of successive phases of insect life that add up to the revelation of metamorphosis, knowledge develops in and through *both* the network *and* its nodes; it is *both* external *and* internal, requiring the interaction of the environment *with* the individual.³² Science educator Andrew Di Sessa critiques Latour's theory with the objection that it is neither necessary nor productive to think in such mutually exclusive terms. In a bid to overcome the 'balkanization' that has polarized essentialist positions in this debate between 'cognitive/individual' and 'socio-cultural', he proposes instead a more *dialectical* theory of cognition, integrating these apparently conflicting paradigms in the learning sciences.³³ His think-

sie bringen sich zuweilen um wegen der üblichen harten Behandlung, die man ihnen zuteil werden läßt, denn sie sind der Ansicht, daß sie in ihrem Land als Freie wiedergeboren werden, so wie sie mich aus eigenem Munde unterrichtet haben.'

³² Latour, *Pandora's Hope* 58: 'It seems that reference is not simply the act of pointing or a way of keeping, on the outside, some material guarantee for the truth of a statement; rather it is our way of keeping something *constant* through a series of transformations. Knowledge does not reflect a real external world that it resembles via mimesis, but rather a real interior world, the coherence and continuity of which it helps to ensure'. Latour's formulation could be applied quite directly to the bits of perceptual knowledge, recorded and conveyed from the outposts of the Dutch trading companies, as each one is always and inevitably a record of the observer's understanding of a moment in time. Latour seeks to track the move 'from locality, particularity, materiality, multiplicity, and continuity, through successive stages to compatibility, standardization, text, calculation, circulation, and relative universality'. Latour, *Pandora's Hope* 71.

³³ My thanks to Professor Di Sessa for sharing this work in progress, and his critique of this paper as well. He is explicitly not suggesting that 'any two seemingly opposed perspectives should be synthesized...' Di Sessa A., "Dialectical Approaches to Cognition: A Re-interpretation and Critique of Latour's 'Externalist' Theory of Reference" (in preparation).

ing at the cutting edge of cognitive psychology offers some conceptual tools that also map fruitfully onto our historical example.³⁴

In response to Latour's 'theory of reference' – passing static representations along a chain – Di Sessa proposes a 'theory of inference'.³⁵ His central claim is this:

In short, representation and re-representation is a knowledge-intensive business, and the knowledge of those who use and create representations is a worthy topic of study. None of this is possible to say within the ban on cognitive explanations of science that Latour proposed.³⁶

For a simple yet analogous example, we cannot give a satisfactory explanation of Maria Sibylla Merian's new scientific discoveries solely on the basis of her travels with the Dutch West India Company; the network is crucial, but so is her individual work within it. Transcribing Di Sessa's theory of inference and its corollaries about representation onto the business of Merian's scientific enterprise (or other such cases) demonstrates just how important his contention really is to a fuller appreciation of how scientific knowledge happens, and in the process it helps us to get at the workings of perceptual knowledge in particular.³⁷

³⁴ Di Sessa recognizes that Latour is interested in 'externalizing' cognition: 'in making it a matter of construction and circulation of material things, most notably representations, and also a matter of community, rather than individual thought.' But, he protests, '(t)hrowing the baby of personal knowledge out with the bathwater of essentialist views of the powers of science as residing in a special superiority of thinking constitutes, for me, an unproductive move in affiliative dynamics' (this last being his euphemism for disciplinary politics). Di Sessa A., "Dialectical Approaches" 6.

³⁵ Di Sessa, "Dialectical Approaches" 10: 'How do words manage to cross the great ontological gap from their manifestation to their referents? What is the symbol-referent relation, what is its basis, and how is it constructed and maintained? [...] The nature of the gap is, according to Latour, a representational gap, 'where things of the world become forms, where we take a bit of physical world (perhaps a representation itself), and put it into the world of forms/symbols in terms of (another) representation.'

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁷ Di Sessa lays out Latour's arguments as 'a journey from the world to symbolic representation (assertions) about the world'. It may seem simple – too simple – when we're considering that Merian's visual records of stages in metamorphoses take us from the world to representations of the world (and even symbolic representations of the world) – specifically, symbolic representation of the temporal transformations of metamorphoses. But the inferences magnify if we turn to consider ethnographic representation, as we shall shortly see. Indeed, as even Latour's discussions demonstrate, networks serve effectively in collection and assembly of information – just as they can also be pernicious in establishing control over subaltern populations. So too the visual images that are one means of representing that information: they can be enormously valuable records of new knowledge about geography, botany, zoology, anthropology –

Because he makes a call to take stock of representation itself. 'Field studies such as Latour's surely will teach us a lot that is nearly invisible in conversations between psychologists and scientists, or in a priori descriptions of the power of representation. For one, the absolutely pervasive nature of representation needs to be documented, and its diverse forms and functions need cataloguing.'³⁸ It is a project that calls for much future work, but he offers some initial steps.³⁹ He identifies several *categories* of those gaps between the world and its representations – each of which sheds useful light on our Dutch case as well. He calls them 're-representation,' 'characterization and extraction,' and 'managing the spatio-temporal distribution of work.'

First among these, and most straightforward, is what he calls 're-representation:' 'when we take the same information and put it into a different representational form.' One of his own more contemporary examples of this is when 'pictures are turned into a linear stream of brightness values, completely reversibly, for transmitting from satellite to earth,' but we could propose a seventeenth-century equivalent: the transmission from drawn studies [Fig. 2], to complete compositions assembled out of such studies [Fig. 3] – and in turn, from the exquisitely hand-painted vellums of the Windsor Collection to the engraved publication [Fig. 4]. Again and again one is drawn up short at the information that is transposed, altered, or lost, in this translation. Merian's stunning drawings convey an immediacy that the engravings produced after them, however fine, cannot. The 2008 exhibition

but they can also be misconstrued, misapprehended, and function insidiously in the development and dissemination of misinformation; see below. Another point in Di Sessa's critique that is key for our consideration is this: 'in changing from reference to inference, the fundamental structuring will no longer be chains (alone), but rather networks'. Di Sessa, "Dialectical Approaches" 17. On Merian's 'errors' and her later critics, see Todd, *Chrysalis*.

³⁸ Di Sessa, "Dialectical Approaches" 28. James Elkins's recent book *Visual Studies* has begun just such work, greatly extending the purview of types of images to be considered, including those from the sciences. See Elkins J., *Visual Studies: a Skeptical Introduction* (New York: 2003).

³⁹ His own examples refer to a group of young science students attempting to graph characteristics of motion, but the parallel applicability of his categories to our historical cases is persuasive evidence of their efficacy as robust characteristics of representation in general – including visual representation. Merian's might seem at first like a conceptually different project: on the surface of it, her task is representation, while theirs is what Di Sessa might consider meta-representation. Yet as she represents stages in a life-cycle, it is the meta-representation inherent in her images that is the true gist of her scientific discovery: the metamorphosis that occurs *between* the discrete stages of development she has depicted. Di Sessa, "Dialectical Approaches" 20–23.

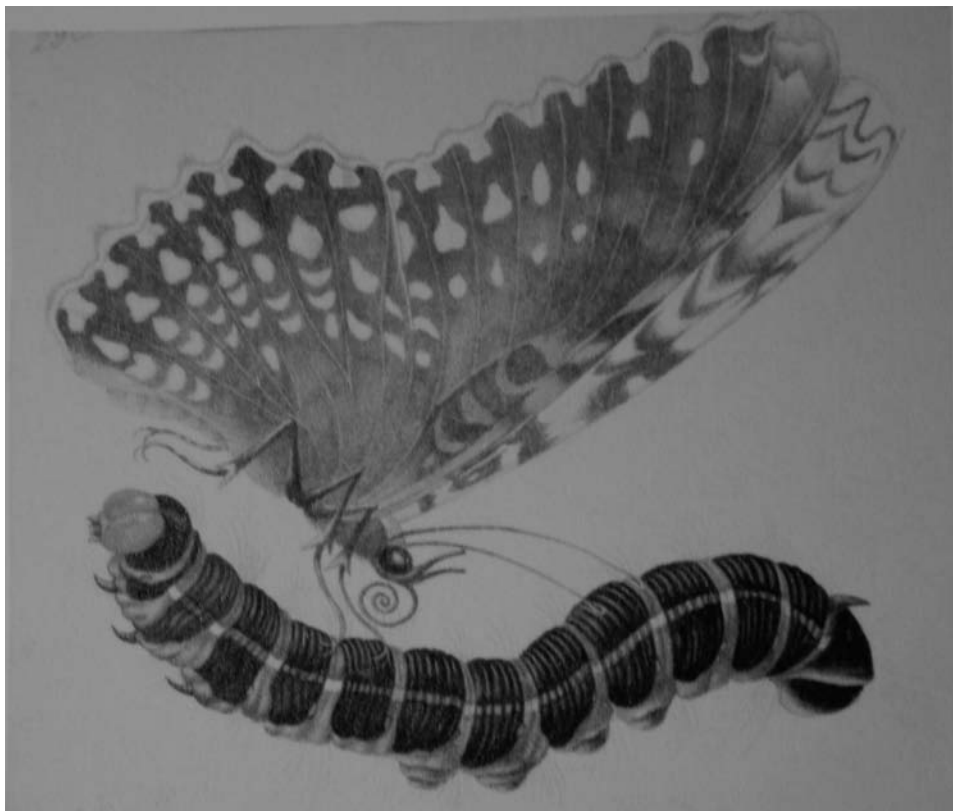


Fig. 2. Maria Sibylla Merian, *White Witch with Caterpillar of a Hawk Moth*, study for plate 20 in *Metamorphosis*, 1705, watercolor on vellum. St. Petersburg, Study Book Library of the Academy of Sciences.



Fig. 3. Maria Sibylla Merian, *Gummi Guttæ Tree with White Witch, Cocoon and Caterpillar of a Hawk Moth and drops of resin*, c. 1705. Watercolor and gum arabic on vellum, over parts of a counterproof of the etching for plate 20 in *Metamorphosis*. Windsor, The Royal Collection.



Fig. 4. J. Mulder after Maria Sibylla Merian, *Gummi Guttæ Tree with White Witch, Cocoon and Caterpillar of Hawk Moth and Drops of Resin*, plate 20 in *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium*, 1705, hand-colored etching. Frankfurt am Main, Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg.

provided the thrilling opportunity to see Merian's watercolors on vellum, crisp and clear and so exquisitely preserved all these years in Her Majesty's collection in Windsor Castle that they are scarcely blemished by age. In turn, those engravings that were hand-colored by Merian herself retain a level of accuracy and sensitivity of observation that is successively lost in versions visibly less careful in their coloring.⁴⁰

A second category of processing, 'characterization and extraction,' is more complicated – even, in DiSessa's words, 'highly important and epistemologically profound'.⁴¹ Human beings are endowed with 'incredibly refined visual and spatial descriptive and inferential capacities... People can literally see things at a glance that, represented in other ways, would be easily missed'.⁴² In familiar parlance, 'a picture is worth a thousand words,' and this goes a long way toward encapsulating the inestimable value of the flow of perceptual knowledge that the Dutch trading companies funneled back into Europe. However, that same capacity can also misfire.

As blatant as this point is, there are also subtleties. In order to make use of some of our visual capacities, we must carefully design the representation so that the theoretical objects and relations that we are interested in stand out and are perceivable in a useful way. [...] So, this is a critical reason for representation or re-representation. However, the magic is not in the link between representations, but in what we do next. We characterize the representation, which almost always involves yet another representational transformation [...], but of a very different character.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ella Reitsma's contribution in the Getty exhibition was to highlight the achievements of the daughters, in efforts to sort and attribute certain works to either Dorothea or the more accomplished elder Johanna – yet, notwithstanding the admitted flourish of the images Reitsma has attributed to Johanna Herolt, the boldness in application of color serves at the same time to accentuate the delicacy of the mother's handling. See Reitsma, *Maria Sybilla Merian*. A parallel but more dramatic instance of the problems introduced by re-representation can be seen in the rather crude woodcuts of the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, most of which were produced after originals by Albert Eckhout and Frans Post that display subtleties utterly lost in the published woodcuts. The contrast between Eckhout's Tapuya couple as he painted them, in life-size oil on canvas, and the small woodcut illustration in Piso and Marcgraf's book, demonstrates that gap quite dramatically. Worse still, some volumes were hand-colored, but many others survive only in black and white; important and valuable as it was, the book in its uncolored state serves far less effectively as a source of scientific information: page after page of tropical fish, vivid and distinctive in their colored state, lose crucial identifying data in black and white. See Piso – Marcgraf, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*.

⁴¹ Di Sessa "Dialectical Approaches" 20.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 20–21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.

Characterization, or ‘to put into theoretically important terms’, often involves a more particular case he calls *extraction*: ‘We take a piece of the world, which literally can be viewed and characterized in thousands of ways, and ‘read out’ a single, theoretically relevant attribute’.⁴⁴ Scientists extract descriptive qualities – texture, or color; or they measure things – ‘and we extract precisely because particular aspects have theoretical cogency and value’. Here Di Sessa has hit upon a process that is fundamental to the translation from world to image, one with which visual artists are intimately familiar: *which* visual features are theoretically cogent and valuable? For Roman artists during the Renaissance it was *disegno*; for the Venetians, *colore*. For Ingres and his pupil Degas, again line; for Monet and the other Impressionists, everything but.

So too for the seventeenth-century artists charged with documenting distant worlds: which features, among the myriad visual impulses that swarmed about them, were theoretically cogent and valuable? This was precisely the frustration that Maria Sibylla Merian felt upon examining the tropical specimens displayed so elegantly in the Witsen collections in Amsterdam:

In Holland I was utterly amazed to see what beautiful creatures had been brought from the East and West Indies, especially when it was my privilege to see the costly collection of the honorable Dr. Nicolaas Witsen, mayor of Amsterdam and Director of the East India Company, as well as that of the noble Mr. Jonas Witsen, secretary of Amsterdam. I also saw the collection of Mr. Frederick Ruysch, doctor of anatomical and botanical medicine, that of Mr. Livinus Vincent, and many others. In those collections I found countless other insects, but (presented) in such a way that their origins and their development were missing there, that is, how they metamorphosed from caterpillars into pupae and so forth. All this inspired me to undertake a great and expensive journey to Surinam (a hot and wet land, where the abovementioned gentlemen have obtained these insects), in order to continue my observations there.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁵ Merian, *Metamorphosis* 8. ‘In Holland sah ich jedoch voller Verwunderung, was für schöne Tiere man aus Ost- und West-Indien kommen ließ, besonders, wenn mir die Ehre zuteil wurde, die kostbare Sammlung des Hochwohl-geboren Herrn Dr. Nicolaas Witsen, Bürgermeister der Stadt Amsterdam und Vorsteher der Ostindischen Gesellschaft, sehen zu dürfen wie auch die des edlen Herrn Jonas Witsen, Sekretär selbiger Stadt. Ferner sah ich auch die Sammlung des Herrn Fredericus Ruysch, Medicinæ Doctor Anatomes et Botanices Professor, die des Herrn Livinus Vincent und vieler anderer. In jenen Sammlungen habe ich diese und zahllose andere Insekten gefunden, aber so, daß dort ihr Ursprung und ihre Fortpflanzung fehlten,

Having extracted the specimens from their environments because taxonomy had been considered relevant but life cycles not, these other collectors had omitted the very information which for her was crucial. It was her idea to re-connect those specimens with their context (the approach frequently shorthanded in the scholarship as 'ecological'), identifying the plants they actually fed on, and – still more theoretically crucial – illustrating each one along with the egg, larva, and pupa that constituted the other phases in its full life cycle.⁴⁶ Classification or identification was one thing – Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), the 'Father of Taxonomy,' was to take that up with a will – but for her, the characteristics most theoretically relevant had all to do with growth and change: with the truly miraculous development of these living, breathing creatures. She had to betake herself to Suriname to trap the caterpillars and witness the astonishing transformations into moth and butterfly that she would then record in such exquisite detail. Restoring the necessary context, and then, as we might say, re-extracting what she now recognized as relevant to her own concerns, was precisely the process that yielded the most crucial results of her work. This particular page [Fig. 5] was among the most criticized of Merian's illustrations in the nineteenth century because people said there could not be so many caterpillars all going with the same moth, *Arsenura armida* – but she was proven absolutely right in the end, and in fact this print is one of the three that Merian transferred to the copper plate herself.⁴⁷

But even as extraction can yield clarity out of confusion (or profusion: enabling us to see the trees for the forest, as it were), it can also (whether deliberately or not) manipulate and even misdirect our understanding.⁴⁸ Latour too alludes to this sinister potential in his historical

das heißt, wie sie sich aus Raupen in Puppen und so weiter verwandeln. Das alles hat mich dazu angeregt, eine große und teure Reise zu unternehmen und nach Surinam zu fahren (ein heißes und feuchtes Land, woher die vorgenannten Herren diese Insekten erhalten haben), um dort meine Beobachtungen fortzusetzen'.

⁴⁶ See Davis, *Women on the margins*, and Todd, *Chrysalis*.

⁴⁷ See Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian* 224.

⁴⁸ Sometimes with far more subtle but yet more sobering results: from the detailed watercolors that John Smith sent back from Virginia, the engravings produced for Theodor De Bry's published volumes of the *Grands Voyages* 'extracted' figures from landscapes in such a way that much contextual information was omitted – information that could be vital to a fuller understanding of the people depicted. See Honour H., *The new golden land: European images of America from the discoveries to the present time* (New York: 1975); Alexander M. (ed.), *Discovering the New World: based on the works of Theodore de Bry* (New York: 1976); and Groesen M. van, *The representations of the overseas world in the De Bry collection of voyages (1590–1634)* (Leiden-Boston: 2008).



Fig. 5. Maria Sibylla Merian, “*Pallisaden-Boom*” with *Metamorphosis of Arsenura Armida*, plate 11 in *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium*, 1730, hand-colored engraving and etching. London, The Natural History Museum.

discussions. As Di Sessa observes, 'Latour amply recognizes extraction and the surprising power it gives us. In 'forgetting' almost everything about a sample, we make it much easier to manage exactly that which matters to us'. But what matters to us? 'Characterization is replete with inference,' Di Sessa asserts: extraction links (or gaps) depend not only upon the technology available for their extraction, but also ('a deeper inferential issue', as he points out) upon 'the assumed relations that make an extraction relevant'.⁴⁹

Merian's butterflies are one case in point: it is the assumed relations of metamorphosis that make it relevant to include on one and the same page just the right egg, and just the right pupa, with the right butterfly, and on the appropriate plant no less; in so doing she performs the work of natural science in a simple and elegant yet fundamental way. But other examples are potentially more insidious, when the field moves into the human sciences – when what is at stake is not just whether a hummingbird lays three eggs or four [again see Fig. 1], or whether or not it can be devoured by a pink-toed tarantula ('mistakes' for which Merian was challenged by her critics), but rather with ethnographic issues – questions of race, say, or civility. For example, Ernst van den Boogaart assesses the role played by the plates in Linschoten's *Itinerario*: while the text consists mainly of 'informative comments strung together in a relatively haphazard way', it is instead the series of illustrations – the 'deployment of visual resources' – that 'invites the reader to systematic categorization and comparison' of the peoples depicted.

They lead to the insight that the main theme of the series of plates is the systematic comparison and evaluation of the morals and practices, rather than the representation of Asian dress, means of transport, and fruits, plants, and trees. The plates also indicate generally what does and does not belong to the comparative argument that they have triggered, and they suggest a way to structure it. All kinds of items that were important in the *Itinerario* proper – such as the information on trade – have been left out of the engravings. The plates focus the mind of the reader, distracted as it is by the proliferation of observations in the text, on a single theme: the morals and practices of the 'Indians and Portuguese living there'.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Di Sessa, "Dialectical Approaches" 21.

⁵⁰ Van den Boogaart E., first in *Jan Huygen van Linschoten and the Moral Map of Asia* (London: 1999); and then also in *Civil and Corrupt Asia: Image and text in the Itinerario and the Icones of Jan Huygen van Linschoten* (Chicago – London: 2003), *passim*; here 33.

Van den Boogaart contends that the plates convey a hierarchy of Asian civility, with China firmly at its apex ('overflowing with all beauty and sumptuousness'), others such as Goa and Ballagate in between (Malacca 'outstrips all other Indians in language, fine manners, and amorosity', while the Javanese are judged as 'an obstinate and stubborn people'), and Malabar and Pegu at the bottom 'stand for dark decay'.⁵¹ So in the pictorial display, the native of Pegu (Burma) sits on a pillow because of his sodomitic habits, and the inhabitants of Saint Thomas afflicted with elephantiasis are 'all accursed, as the Indians say' [Fig. 6]. At what point does this kind of extraction become 'relevant', and what are the 'assumed relations' that make it so? Here is Di Sessa's characterization and extraction in action – with more sinister results than the discovery of the life cycles of butterflies.⁵² Di Sessa concludes:

In short, characterizing is an inferentially fraught move, and one critical to evaluate in making scientific arguments. [...] So, the general pattern here is that a representational transformation that is inferentially innocuous – a re-representation (to make things easier to characterize) is followed by another representational transformation – a characterization, which is inferentially fraught and critical to assess in the larger argument.⁵³

Analysis of higher-order characterization of this nature could help to conceptualize a whole range of signficatory artistic choices, in that it can convey complex cultural messages directly across that 'gap' – without language ever coming into play.

Di Sessa identifies one other concept that is, he immediately qualifies, 'not a representational gap at all'. This one he calls 'managing the

⁵¹ Van den Boogaart, *Civil and Corrupt Asia* 29. Underscoring the conflation of Van den Boogaart's and Di Sessa's points, Linschoten's illustrations were also published at the time in a separate volume without the text, as just the *Icones*: a still more emphatic extraction.

⁵² In a parallel analysis, Peter Mason posits the same sort of hierarchy of civility within Albert Eckhout's 'ethnographic portraits' (the term is problematic, and has been much discussed) of the peoples of Brazil. See Mason P., *Infelicities: Representations of the Exotic* (Baltimore-London: 1998) 54. The bibliography on Eckhout's work is by now quite extensive, but a good recent summary treatment may be found in Parker Brien R.P., *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, court painter in Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam: 2006). Contrasts such as that between the Tapuya and Tupi women in Eckhout's pairings, playing off visual cues such as the Tapuya woman's nakedness (coded for European viewers as incivility), or the severed body parts she bears signaling cannibalism (as contrasted with the baby held by the Tupi woman).

⁵³ Di Sessa, "Dialectical Approaches" 22.



Fig. 6. Joannes à Doetechum, 'A native of Pegu [...] An inhabitant of the islands of the Moluccas [...] Of the Penequais family of Saint Thomas, all accursed, as the Indians say', in Jan Huygen van Linschoten, *Itinerario* (Amsterdam, Cornelis Claesz: 1596). Amsterdam, University Library of Amsterdam.

spatio-temporal distribution of work'. It might seem a trivial point – but he cautions otherwise.⁵⁴ The example he draws from Latour has to do with regular geometric arrangement of collected specimens, which may or may not be as simple as 'object identity preservation.' Just such regular geometric arrangement may be seen in Georg Rumphius's published study of the natural history of the Moluccas: pages are crowded with row upon neat row of mollusks or crustaceans. Merian herself preserved this structure when she was called upon to complete Rumphius's work after his death [Fig. 7]. In the wake of the tragic calamities that had befallen the 'blind seer of Ambon' and his work, nevertheless in 1705 a partial release was issued in print, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitenkamer* [The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet], with Merian's help. But Rumphius's gridlike layouts highlight the contrast with Merian's more 'ecological' approach. In her Suriname project, published the same year of 1705, the spatial arrangement of her specimens was indeed both 'representational' and 'critically field-dependent' (two of Di Sessa's key points), yet wholly organic: which insects feeding on which plants, which larvae and pupae pair with which winged creatures. Sadly, in an echo of Rumphius's mishaps, on her own return voyage from Suriname, a number of her specimens had been jumbled on board ship; errors that appear in the published plates may likely be attributed to these confusions. For instance the larva and pupa shown with the Zebra Swallowtail, *Eurytides protesilaus*, belong to a different species: the spotted Amberwing butterfly, *Thyridia psidi* [Fig. 8]. That misstep falls squarely under the heading of 'transporting samples without mixing them up' – but there are more complex instantiations as well.⁵⁵ When it comes to the arrangement of images on a page, say – or even the sequencing of pages of images in a book – such seemingly pragmatic considerations can take on representational significance. Hierarchies from high to low, sequences from first to last – such spatial elements can seem innocuous or pragmatic, but they are potentially fraught with meaning. Particularly, again, when we are dealing not with butterflies but with human beings, such seemingly neutral factors

⁵⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁵ 'The critical point', Di Sessa emphasizes, 'is to be clear on these simplicities so as not to confuse object identity preservation with either re-representation, narrowly construed, or the far more problematic and critical inferential-links-exhibited-as-representational-transformations, such as characterization and extraction'. Di Sessa, "Dialectical Approaches".

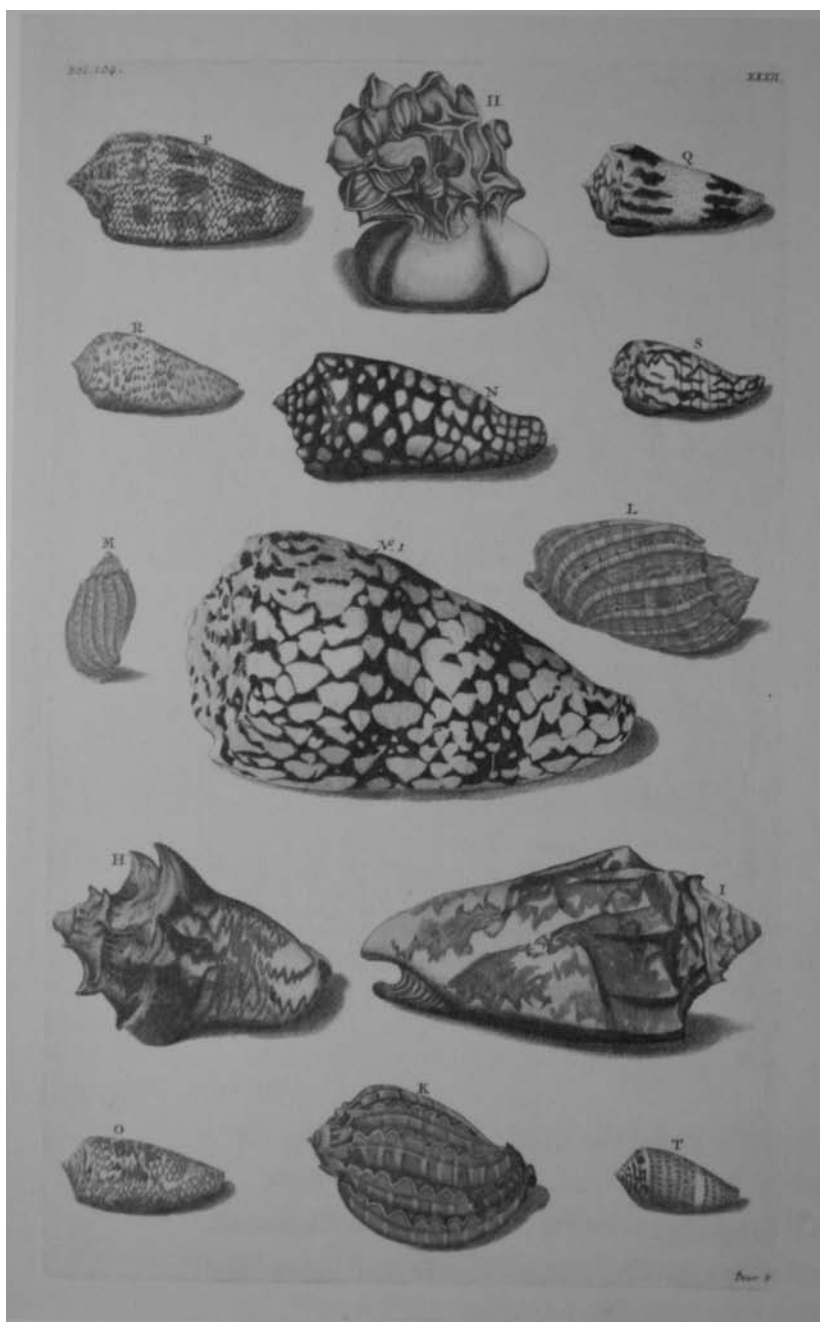


Fig. 7. J. Deur after Maria Sibylla Merian, plate 32. Hand-colored engraving and etching in Georg Rumphius, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* (Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705). Amsterdam, Artis Library.



Fig. 8. Maria Sibylla Merian, *Duroia Eriopila* with *Protesilaus Glaucolaus Leucas* and the Caterpillar and Pupa of the *Thyridia Psidii* (Spotted Amberwing) Butterfly, c. 1705. Watercolor and arabic gum on vellum, over parts of a counterproof of the etching for plate 43 in *Metamorphosis*. Windsor, The Royal Collection.

can have even sinister implications.⁵⁶ Do the line-ups of indigenous peoples displayed across Linschoten's pages reduce them to the status of so many botanical samples in a herbarium?

We shall conclude with one final lesson from Di Sessa's critique of Latour, which again has relevance too for the early modern world of Dutch trade. He cautions that what passes for truth along the nodes of such a network is nowhere as stable as Latour seems to want it. 'Chains of inscription are better viewed as part of the validation process, scientific argumentation, rather than the limited and questionable view that they are pipelines of truth via secure reference'.⁵⁷ Of course, this vulnerability works both ways: many of the challenges to Merian's accuracy were dismissive to the point of insult, in openly demeaning gender bias.⁵⁸ As in the above-mentioned case of her quite accurate observations of *Arsenura armida*, critics sought to discredit her on every count. Hummingbirds lay three eggs, not four as pictured in this nest [Fig. 1]; and her adversaries refused to believe that a pink-toed tarantula would really eat a bird. One naysayer claimed to have settled the matter when he put a tarantula in a box with a hummingbird and the spider fled, though on this point too she was subsequently redeemed when another eyewitness reported having seen a spider devouring a bird in the South American jungle.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ethnographers, sociologists, even historians of science, grappling today with the ramifications of western modes of producing their knowledge, highlight just how profoundly the visual model established within these early pictorial records influenced the fundamental tenets of the later field of anthropology, or the very workings of modern science. On the impact of the visual mode in the development of modern anthropology, see Fabian J., *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: 1983), and Clifford J., *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: 1988). The undeniably strategic and even sinister potential of control through visual representation is a familiar trope of this literature; but to get at its real workings, we must begin with fundamental questions such as those examined here. It is most particularly in this human realm of ethnography that anthropologists, historians, and art historians alike have targeted the more problematic potential for manipulation that lurks within this realm of the visual, in keen critiques of visualizations of cultural 'Others' by European observers, and their sometimes sinister implications; see discussion below.

⁵⁷ Di Sessa, "Dialectical Approaches" 28.

⁵⁸ On gendered critiques of Merian's contributions to natural science see also Schiebinger L. *The mind has no sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge: 1989) and Schiebinger L., *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: 1993).

⁵⁹ Schiebinger, Davis, Todd, and Reitsma, all adduce the blatantly discriminatory commentary, most notoriously the manuscript c. 1715 in the library of the nineteenth-century society *Natura Artis Magistra* in Amsterdam, disparaging her book as a trifling thing: 'what experience does such a woman have, after a short stay in a country

So the tenuousness of ‘perceptual knowledge’ remains at issue; early modern artists were constantly at pains to attest to the accuracy of their eyewitness records, and cases to the contrary come from every quarter. One botanical example was the curious controversy that raged in the seventeenth century over true and false nutmeg, seemingly identical in appearance, but not in quality or even essence [Fig. 9].⁶⁰ For a zoological illustration, consider the odd creature apparently meant to be a rhinoceros in the frontispiece to Johan Nieuhof’s book on the East and West Indies [Fig. 10].⁶¹ Geographical distortions were everywhere along the trajectory of global exploration: tracing the slow evolution of the continent of Australia on early maps makes a particularly revealing demonstration of this [Fig. 11]. And Baroque anthropology (though no one would quite call it that) is rife with errors both obvious and less so, as Europe was swept with the fever of exoticism: the set of tiles preserved at the Rijksmuseum intermingling African and Chinese motifs is one of the more amusing instances [Fig. 12].⁶² So much more wonder that Merian’s meticulous illustrations contain so very few errors; this can only be thanks to the embodied cognition of such a careful eyewitness in the field.

In short, we must concur with Di Sessa: the role of cognition cannot be omitted from the theoretical picture. Maria Sibylla Merian could only have reached the shores of South America thanks to the trade ties of the Dutch West India Company, but what she accomplished once she got there was a more personal achievement. The network and its individual agents, external and internal reference, each had a role to play. And perceptual knowledge was at the heart of this process: Merian’s pictures, patient and marvellous, convey revelations

such as Surinam [...] crawling about in forests and thickets [...]” That is certainly no job for a woman’. Quoted in Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian* 242–243.

⁶⁰ On true and false nutmegs, see Spary E.C., “Of Nutmegs and Botanists: The Colonial Cultivation of Botanical Identity”, in Schiebinger L. – Swan C. (eds.), *Colonial Botany: Science Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: 2005) 187–203.

⁶¹ See Nieuhof J., *Gedenkwaerdige Zee en Lantreize door de Voornaemste Landschappen van West en Oostindien* (Amsterdam, Weduwe Jacob van Meurs : 1682).

⁶² Of course there is a difference between ‘scientific images’ like those of Merian that had to communicate a perceived truth, and images that first and foremost had a decorative function. See on the Rijksmuseum tiles Massing J.M., “Panel with Chinoiserie and Eckhoutian figures”, in Kolfin E. – Schreuder S. (eds.), *Black is Beautiful. Rubens to Dumas* (Zwolle: 2008) 224.



Fig. 9. Anonymous, The Amboina Nutmeg. Engraving in Georg Everhard Rumphius, *Herbarium Amboinense*, 6 vols. (Amsterdam, Jan Roman de jonge: 1741–55), vol. II, plate IV. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library.



Fig. 10. Joan Nieuhof, frontispiece to *Gedenkwaerdige Lantreise door de Voornaemste Landschappen van West en Oostindien* (Amsterdam, Jacob van Meurs: 1682). Stanford, California, Stanford University Library.

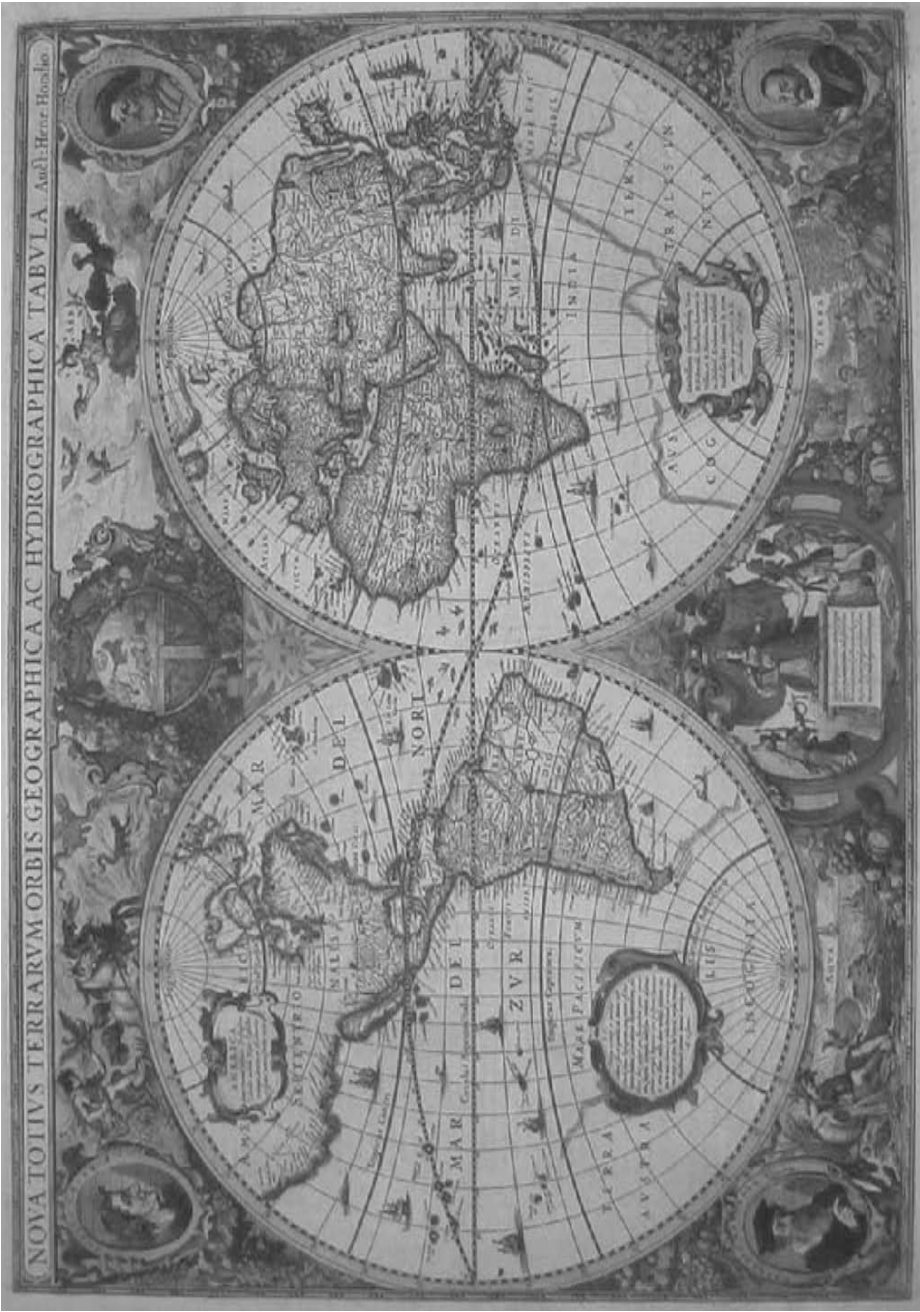


Fig. 11. Hendrik Hondius & Jan Jansson, *Nova Totius Terrarum Orbis Geographica ac Hydrographica Tabula* (Amsterdam: c. 1630), Sidney, Library of New South Wales.



Fig. 12. Anonymous, Panel with chinoiserie and Eckhoutian figures, c. 1690–1730. Glazed earthenware, made up of 78 tiles, with polychrome decor. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, NM 12400–443.

that remain forever imprinted, not only in our own imaginations, but in the annals of modern science.

Worldwide Web

This essay is but one pass at the properties of perceptual knowledge as it moved along the conduits of the world of Dutch trade. While this discussion has targeted scientific illustration, the concept of perceptual knowledge in its fullest extent could equally well encompass the cultural information coded in artistic style more broadly construed. In that respect, foreign objects of art and craft transported this more immediate order of contact across those vast expanses as well, relaying perceptual knowledge of unfamiliar *artistic* traditions unmediated by interlocutors – so powerfully that they would in time inspire metamorphoses in ways of seeing at many points around the globe, from Rococo *chinoiserie*, to the *japonisme* that would ultimately restructure the very premises of Western painting in Impressionism. That discussion is for another time, but once again, the mercantile ties of the trading companies were instrumental to such interculturalization.

The voyagers who travelled the earth along the Dutch trade routes in the seventeenth century gained new knowledge about distant lands to which Europeans back home had never been exposed. This is at once dramatic – nothing short of world-changing – and yet, in some respects, perfectly obvious. But the insights of contemporary neuroscience underscore a deeper stratum of significance to this new knowledge: the whole complex environment in which a perceiver is embedded has a profound influence on how and what that organism learns; in turn, such interactions change not only that organism, but the total state of the dynamical system of which it is a part.

The more we learn of it, the more intelligently we can assess the part played by perceptual knowledge in the early modern development of European proto-scientific views of these ‘new worlds’. But in light of our consideration of the pioneering work of Maria Sibylla Merian in this context, how fitting that a popular term nowadays for that very phenomenon of profound interconnectivity is: ‘the butterfly effect’.

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PICTURING NEW NETHERLAND AND NEW YORK.
DUTCH-ANGLO TRANSFER OF
NEW WORLD INFORMATION

Frans R.E. Blom

New Netherland in the Eyes of the Beholder

The WIC settlements in America, and New Netherland in particular, remained basically *terra incognita* in its early years for most people in the home country. Over the first four decades after Hudson's discovery in 1609, only a few books would provide public information on this overseas area.¹ These limited descriptions, including the ones by Johannes de Laet in 1625 and 1630, mapped the coastlines and rivers on the basis of travelogues and journals, in order to indicate places for shipping, anchoring and trading. Obviously, they did not reach a wide circle of readers, since they addressed merchants interested in the West India Company's opportunities. Moreover, these observations on New Netherland were relatively small elements in the overall descriptions of the West which were published in large and expensive volumes and were affordable exclusively to high class readers. This all changed with the publication of Adriaen van der Donck's *Description of New Netherland* in 1655, a new type of representation in terms of its contents, readers and purpose. The book had a great impact on the information, distribution and visibility of New Netherland, in Amsterdam as well as in London after the English had taken over the colony in 1664. It is the aim of this contribution to trace and interpret the altering textual and visual information during that process in a functionalistic approach, following the text from its first edition in Amsterdam through its many-sided afterlife, both in the Dutch Republic and in England.

In its most recent 2008 translation, the *Description of New Netherland* is qualified as 'an essential first-hand account of the lives and world

¹ See Asher G.M., *A Bibliographical and Historical Essay on the Dutch Books and Pamphlets relating to New Netherland and to the Dutch West-India Company* (Amsterdam: 1854).

of Dutch colonists and northeastern Native communities in the seventeenth century'.² For however much this is true, the textual images presented in the *Description* of 1655 were part of a major emigration campaign in the city of Amsterdam. The opening pages ostensibly dedicate the *Description of New Netherland* to the powerful commercial city Amsterdam, in the persons of its four Burgomasters: Joan Huydekooper, Cornelis de Graef, Johan van de Pol Hermansz and Hendrik Dircksz. Spieghel. All four are addressed in a direct and unconcealed request to take concern of New Netherland, now that 'the West India Company is in a fallen state'.³ With this phrase, which occurs twice on the same page, it might seem as if the *Description* was challenging the Company's authority and monopoly in the colony.⁴ However, the tone is softened in the following pages, through a second dedication addressing 'The Directors of the honorable West India Company'. Clearly, Adriaen van der Donck and his Amsterdam publisher tried to find as much support as possible for their ultimate goal, the populating of New Netherland: 'And because it is Your daily concern to bring people to that land [...] I felt the urge to give this [description] to my fellow countrymen, to the bold and skillful people in particular. Those who might otherwise not know of that good and healthy air and the potentials of New Netherland, can now be stimulated to go there'.⁵ The double dedication of the *Description* prudently avoided a

² Van der Donck A., *A Description of New Netherland*, ed. C.T. Gehring and W.A. Starna; transl. D.W. Goedhuys (Lincoln: 2008), quote from the foreword by Russell Shorto. Biographic details on Van der Donck are mainly based on Shorto R., *The Island at the Center of the World. The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America* (New York: 2004).

³ Van der Donck A., *Beschrijvinge van Nieuw-Nederlandt (ghelyck het tegenwoordigh in Staet is) begrijpande de Nature, Aert, gelegentheyt en vruchtbaerheyt van het selve lant [...]* (Amsterdam, Evert Nieuwenhof: 1655) fol. *2v: 'Ende al-hoewel den Staet vande ghemelde West-Indische Compagnie nu als vervallen schijnt te wesen, soo is nochtans dat Noorder gedeelte van America, genaemt Nieuw-Nederlandt (daer af dit Tractaetjen is handelende) van soodanighe waerdigheyt, dat het met groote reden in goedige achttinge genomen mach en behoort te worden, ghemerckt den grooten handel op't selve dagelijcks meer ende meer gedreven wordende'.

⁴ A direct challenge on the West India Company's authority in New Netherland had been published five years earlier, by the same author Adriaen van der Donck: *Vertoogh van Nieu-Nederland, wegens de ghelegentheyd, vruchtbaerheyt, en soberen staet desselfs* (The Hague, Michiel Stael: 1650). The English translation, entitled 'Remonstrance', as published in *Narrative of New Netherland*, ed. by J.F. Jameson in 1909, is on the internet: <http://etext.teamnesbitt.com/books/etext/etext02/nwnth10.txt.html>

⁵ Van der Donck, *Beschrijvinge van Nieuw-Nederlandt* fol. *3v-4r: 'Ende also uwe E.W. dagelijcks met seer groote vlijt ende sollicite, alles zijt bestellende, om dat Lantschap met bequaeme Colonien van Menschen te versien [...] daerom hebbe ick niet konnen

self-operating or even subversive tone for the book and anticipated every possible critique in that respect by the Company. At the same time, positioning the book in their service encouraged the West India Company to change their former restrictive trade-focused attitude towards the colony. Moreover, the Company's commitment to the growth of the New Netherlands' population was underscored, when Van der Donck, just before publishing the book, passed the care and copyrights of his *Description* into the hands of the West India Company in February 1655.⁶

Adriaen van der Donck's initiative to stimulate emigration to New Netherland, where he had lived for almost a decade, was now gaining *momentum*. After six years of lobbying in *patria*, he had won the three major parties involved over to his side, the States General in The Hague, the City of Amsterdam and the West India Company. But, apart from the institutions mentioned in the dedication, what kind of people were supposed to take notice of Van der Donck's *Description of New Netherland*? A bit of an answer is on the title page, as the book focuses on 'the natural disposition of the land, its situation and fertility, as well as its profitable and desirable opportunities, both indigenous and imported, which might contribute to the people's conditions there'.⁷ Thus, the *Description* represented an *exposé* of opportunities for

nalaten alle mijne Lantsluyden ten besten, ende voornementlijck veele kloekchertighe en bequame Luyden, mijne Mede-Burgeren, dit te laten toe komen, opdat sij, die andersins soo grondelijck van de goede ende gesonde lucht en vruchtbaerheyt des gemelten Lantschaps Nieuw-Nederland, niet bewust en zijn, te beth mogen opgeweeckt worden om derwaerts te gaen'.

⁶ Van der Donck's patent on the *Description of New Netherland* was granted by the States-General and the States of Holland already in 1653. It was passed by the author onto the West India Company in February 1655, when he left for America again; see Van der Donck A., *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant, (gelijck het tegenwoordigh in staet is) begriipende de nature, aert, gelegentheyt en vruchtbaerheyt van het selve landt* [...] Den tweeden druck. Met een pertinent kaertje van't zelve landt verciert, en van veel druck-fouten gesuyvert (Amsterdam, Evert Nieuwenhof: 1656) back side of title page: 'also 't Octroy van 't selve boeck door hare Ho: Mo: de Heeren Staten-Generael, ende de Ed: Gr: Mo: Heeren Staten van Hollant ende West Vrieslant op den persoon vande gemelte ADRIAEN vander DONCK is gedecerneert, ende nochtans sulcx de Compagnie is rakende, aen wien de gemelte vander DONCK 't voorghedachte Octroy ende Tractaet heeft ter handen ghestelt ende sijn recht overgelaten'.

⁷ The subtitle (Amsterdam: 1655) reads: 'Begriipende de Nature, Aert, gelegentheyt en vruchtbaerheyt van het selve Lant; mitsgaders de proffijtelijcke ende gewenste toevallen, die aldaer tot onderhout der Menschen, (soo uyt haer selven als van buyten ingebracht) gevonden worden'.

people who lived in New Netherland, or rather for those who might consider a life there.

Underscoring this persuasive character, the book also comprises a dialogue section pondering the question of emigration. The rhetorical techniques applied, were well known devices in Amsterdam opinion making publications at that time. The central issue is discussed by different fictitious, though clearly type characters, representing different viewpoints. The dialogue in the *Description* features two parties in opposition: a Dutch patriot on the one hand, and a New Netherlander on the other. Of course, the debater in favor of emigration is on the winning side, arguing that a strong population in New Netherland would eventually benefit the United Provinces, while at the same time stressing the numerous private opportunities in cultivating the colony.

The title page as well as the dialogue section reveals the *Description's* pragmatic purpose. Both must be considered instruments to raise the interest of ordinary people. In order to reach that particular group of readers, the printing work of the *Description* was not expensive: the text had a compact layout, in gothic type, without any illustrations in the first edition. It was a low-cost popular printing production, done by one of the many anonymous printers at the time, Evert Nieuwenhof, a fairly unknown low-market oriented Amsterdam publisher.⁸

As a printer and bookseller Nieuwenhof did, however, play an important role in the New Netherland population initiative. Soon after the first print of the *Description*, Nieuwenhof produced a second edition in the following year. The new print was corrected and enriched by a map of the colony's territory, which also included a view of the city of New Amsterdam on Manhattan [Fig. 1].⁹ Furthermore, the *Description* in its second edition had a new concluding section that was of high relevance for its intended readers. It consisted of the Conditions for Emigration, which were agreed upon, most recently, by the City of Amsterdam and the West India Company.¹⁰ A list of 35 articles

⁸ The Short Title Catalogue Netherlands (STCN) lists 12 publications by Evert Nieuwenhof. All are in the vernacular for common readers.

⁹ The view of New Amsterdam was based on a drawing, dated around 1650, which was made on the spot and brought to the Republic in order to underline the miserable state of the colony. See Gosselink M., *Land in zicht. Vingboons tekent de wereld van de 17^{de} eeuw* (Zwolle: 2007) 49–50.

¹⁰ The pirate edition of the Conditions was published with 'the consent of the City Burgomasters', according to the printer's impressum on the title page: '*Condition* [etc.] t'Amsterdam, Met consent vande Ed. Hoog. Achtbare Meeren [sic], de Heeren Borge-meesteren, By Evert Nieuwenhoff Boeckverkooper op 't Ruslandt in 't jaer 1656'.

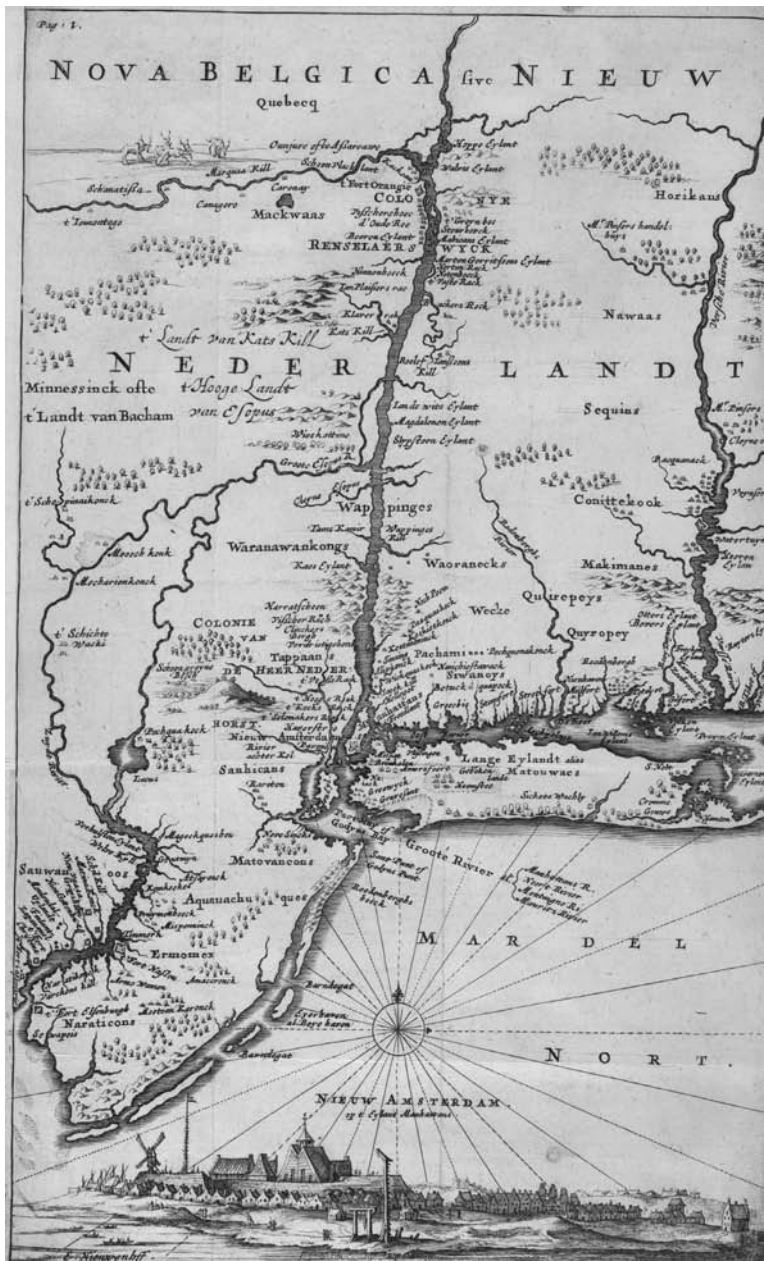


Fig. 1. Anonymous, *Map of New Netherland and view of New Amsterdam*, engraving, both added by Evert Nieuwenhof to the second edition of Adriaen van der Donck's *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlandt* (Amsterdam, Evert Nieuwenhof: 1656). Amsterdam, University Library.

guaranteed as much help and support as possible in terms of, for example, decent transport, good lands, financial aid, temporary tax reduction, protection and freedoms in trade. For registration, the readers were directed to a special board, consisting of both City and Company representatives, which was open for registrations on Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons in the West India Company's House. For this practical information, the publisher Nieuwenhof had pirated the official City pamphlet of the Conditions as published by Jan Banning in the same year [Fig. 2].¹¹ Evidently in a lower quality than the official one, it was an extremely useful addition to the *Description of New Netherland*, in terms of the book's agenda.

The reach of Van der Donck's campaign to inform readers in Amsterdam about New Netherland must have been considerable. After all, the consecutive editions of his book were published within a one year's period. Additional evidence for the impact of the *Description of New Netherland* was found in a pamphlet of 1659, entitled *'t Verheerlickte Nederland*.¹² This dialogue about the Dutch overseas expansion features three Dutchmen from the lower social strata, discussing the topic of emigration. One person is a *schipper* representing an eyewitness of the New World. The others are a peasant and a city artisan, both potential emigrants. From the start the dialogue turns to New Netherland, as both patriots wonder what life looks like out there in the northern parts of America. Both confess, they have no clue at all about New Netherland, and in reply, the *schipper* does not give his own eyewitness account, but instead suggests going to a book shop to buy 'the recently published *Description*, by a man called Verdonck who has lived in the colony for many years and learned a lot about life as it was there'. To stress the importance of the book, a footnote (the pamphlet's only one referring to a publication) assures that it means

¹¹ *Conditiën die door de heeren burgemeesteren der Stadt Amsterdam* [etc.] (Amsterdam: 1656); Koninklijke Bibliotheek, pamphlet nr. 7776a, with digital reproduction on internet: <http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/?/nl/items/KONB04:8>

¹² [anon.] *'t Verheerlickte Nederland door d'herstelde zee-vaart* ([s.l.]: 1659); Koninklijke Bibliotheek, pamphlet nr. 8176, p. 13. (The pamphlet mentions the author's name Verdonck, by mistake). The *Schipper* to the Farmer: 'Wel soo wil [ick] u l. aengewesen hebben een Boecksken van nieuws uytgegeven by eenen *Verdonck* een persoon die verscheyden jaren in Nieu Nederlandt verkeert en daar van vele dinghen vernomen heeft, daar sult ghy in kunnen lesen, hoe het met vele dinghen en insonderheyt met de Boeren handel gelegen is; als ghy in Stee komt soo koopt soo een boecksken, daar sult ghy groot kennisse van dit nieu Nederlandt in ervaren / meer als ick u voor uw soude kunnen daar van seggen'.

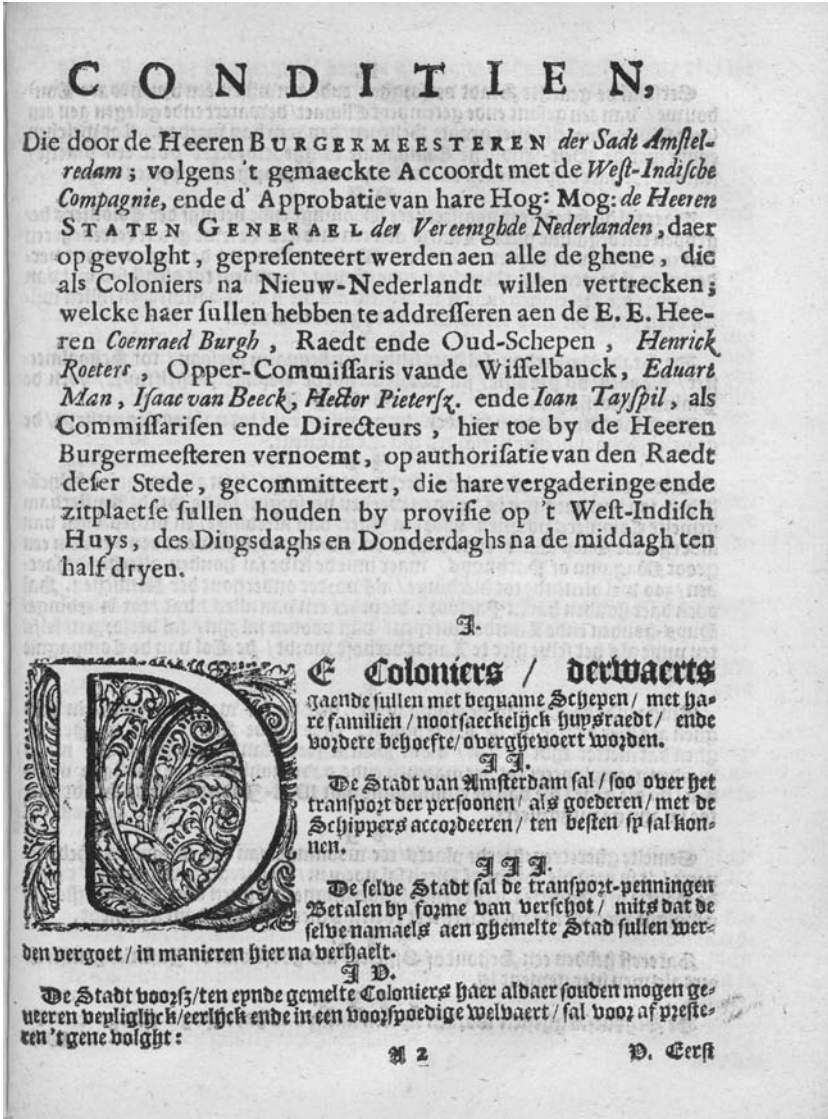


Fig. 2. Evert Nieuwenhof's pirate edition of the *Conditions of Emigration* adopted in the 2nd ed. of *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederland* (Amsterdam, Evert Nieuwenhof: 1656). Amsterdam, University Library.

The Description of New Netherland. For the same reasons, Van der Donck and his publisher Nieuwenhof also featured in another pamphlet about emigration, *Kort Verhael van Nieuw-Nederlants gelegenheit*, published in Amsterdam in October 1662.¹³ Here, their status as the prime source of information about New Netherland is, once again, underscored, as they are qualified as the authorial displayers of New Netherland (in Dutch: 'de N. Neerlantze Vertoonders').

Adriaen van der Donck's *Description*, therefore, can hardly be overestimated as a source of textual and, in the second edition, visual information on New Netherland. For the people in Amsterdam, it offered the most complete and up to date portrait of the vast and promising West India Company possession in North America. The volume of about one hundred pages written by an eyewitness, who had lived there for almost a decade, featured basically all aspects of the territory, from its short history since Hudson's discovery to its geography, natural resources and the ethnography of the indigenous people. In its essence, however, this literary landmark of colonial representation functioned as an incentive for emigration. As a stand alone publication on just that particular part of the New World, it was a relatively small and rather cheaply executed production. For its agenda of persuasion, this low-market oriented source brought selective information and images of New Netherland to common readers. In that respect, the *Description of New Netherland* might still be called a first-hand account, although many elements suffer from manipulative fashioning.

As a potential area for emigration, New Netherland is first of all described by Van der Donck as a lawful Dutch property, since the Dutch had been, in terms of its European history, its 'first discoverers'.¹⁴ The exploration of Manhattan in 1609 had been a Dutch

¹³ *Kort Verhael van Nieuw-Nederlants gelegenheit, Deughden, Natuerlijke Voorrechten, en bysondere bequaemheidt ter bevolkingh*[etc]. ([Amsterdam]: 1662); Koninklijke Bibliotheek sign. 893 E 99. See Blom F.R.E. and Looijesteijn H., "'Selling the South River'" to be published in the *Halve Maen. Journal of the Holland Society of New York*. The *Kort Verhael* has been dated in the preface on fol. *4r. The anonymous publication is generally accepted to be written by Franciscus van der Enden. *Kort Verhael* 27: 'Ziet hierover breeder Vander Donks t'Samensprack, of Discours over de gelegenheit van N. Nederlandt, by Nieuwen-hof gedrukt'. Also, on p. 26, the *Kort Verhael* mentions and quotes the subversive *Discours on New Netherland* of 1650 (see n. 4), without knowing Van der Donck as its author: 'zo zeggen de Gemeenten, of Vertoonders van N. Nederlandt, in 't meer gemelte Vertoogh oock mede dat het zelve voor zoveel hare ervarentheit bereykt, geen Provincie in Europa behoeft te wijcken'.

¹⁴ Van der Donck, *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlandt* (1656) 1–3.

exploit, with a Dutch ship, commissioned with Dutch money from the VOC. Even Henry Hudson is presented as a Dutchman, being born an Englishman, but having lived in the Netherlands for a long time and worked in the service of a Dutch Company. In order to stress the Dutch claim on New Netherland, Van der Donck added the argument that the native inhabitants he had personally spoken to, remembered that they had never before seen a ship like the *Halve Maen*, taking it for a ghost, or a giant fish, or a monster fallen from the sky, and that this was their first encounter with any hairy and bearded human beings like the Europeans aboard.¹⁵

Having depicted New Netherland as a lawful and trustworthy Dutch possession, Van der Donck starts his eulogy on the potentials of the new country. Here, his thematic argument lies in the comparison of New Netherland with the homeland, in which America wins out in all aspects of geography, flora and fauna, minerals and natural resources. In short, New Netherland is represented by its infinite opportunities. On the other hand, however, it is most telling, that in shaping his images Van der Donck predominantly talks in terms of the future and remains silent about life in the current situation there. Nothing is said about the actual Dutch social organization and the administrative structure of the colony. Likewise, a description of the city of New Amsterdam is markedly absent. Most likely, Van der Donck did not want to bring up topics of this kind, in order to conceal the bad state of affairs and serious social problems there. After all, the social policy of the West India Company in New Netherland had been utterly discouraging so far, the colony being in a miserable state until then.¹⁶

A third major strategic manipulation is at work in the chapter on the indigenous people. How did native inhabitants fit into this persuasive image of the promised land? They certainly could not be omitted, as they were a considerable majority in the colony. For commercial

¹⁵ Ibid., 3: 'Doen sommige van haer / ons Schip [Halve Maen] van verre eerst sagen aenkomen / al heel niet wisten wat daarvan te oordelen / ende in swaer beduchten stonden / of het oock spook of diergelijcke werck was / dan of het uyt den Hemel of uyt de hel mochte komen / andere meenden of het wel een seltsame Vis ofte Zee-monster soude moghen wesen / ende of diegene die daer op waeren / beeter nae Duyvels of nae Menschen geleecken [...] gelijk my dickwils verscheyden Indianen getuyghet hebben/dies wy het oock voor een seker bewijs houden / dat de Neerlanders de eerste vinders en besitters van Nieuw Nederlandt zijn'.

¹⁶ The WIC's poor social policy and the bad state of the country had been key themes in the earlier part of Van der Donck's campaign. See his *Vertoogh van Nieu Nederlandt*, as mentioned in n. 4.

interests, too, they were an important factor. But on the other hand, the colony had recently suffered serious losses in the Dutch-Indian wars that had killed quite a number of colonists. Nonetheless, Van der Donck chose to make a systematic ethnography, based on his personal observations and daily contacts. As a result, the *Description of New Netherland* comprises a section of 37 pages, presenting fresh, detailed and many-sided textual images of 'The way of life and the peculiar customs of the indigenous people'.¹⁷ Starting with their physical appearance, food, clothes and houses, the focus turns towards the more intimate aspects of matrimony, birth giving, breast feeding and sexual behavior. The following categories describe formal features of burying rituals, ceremonies, languages and money. Next come their daily occupations, work and leisure time, health care, agriculture and hunting. And for the last part, Van der Donck focuses on their social stratifications, warfare, justice, political structure and finally, religion.

Within this portrait, however, some motives of persuasion are evident. In the first place, the *Description* fashions the Indians with quite an attractive appearance. As for the color of their skin, the author carefully anticipates standard European readers' reactions: 'Their yellowness, however, is not so bad, and quite a lot of them, both men and women, are in fact well proportioned and attractive people'. Moreover, he underlines the commonness and similarity to the Europeans. The similarity is mentioned for both sexes, although there is a significant bias with regard to the indigenous women:

It is true that they appear singular and strange to our nation, because their complexion, speech and dress are so different, but this, on acquaintance, is disregarded. Their women are said to be well favored and fascinating. Several of our Netherlanders fell in love with them (before our women came over). Their faces and countenances are just like theirs and as various as they are in Holland, seldom very handsome, and rarely very ugly, and if they were instructed as our women are, there would be little or no difference in their qualifications.¹⁸

¹⁷ Van der Donck, *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant* (1656) 52–89: 'Vande seeden en ongemeene eygenschappen der oorspronkelijke Ingeboorne in Nieuw Nederlandt.'

¹⁸ Ibid., 53–54: 'Evenwel dese gheelheit daer sy de eene meer als de andere / doch alle aen vast zijn / is sodanigh niet ofte men vindt onder haer veele soo wel Mans als Vrouwen / fraye bevallighe persooenen / en aengesichten / 't is waer / in 't eerste aensien komen sy onse natie wat vreemt te voeren / door dien dat het Couleur / de spraeck en Kleedinghe soo veel verschillende zijn / maer by die daer wat veel mede ommegeaen is dat haest over / en het schijnt dat hare Vrouwen mede eenige aentreckende bevalligheyt over haer hebben / door dien verscheyde *Neerlanders* (eer

Moreover, the *Description* continues to stress the seductiveness of the indigenous women in the paragraph on marriage. As the promiscuity of the native people is mentioned here, special attention is given to girls of marriageable age. They are said to be extremely liberal in their sexual relations: their unlimited lasciviousness is characterized as a socially accepted phenomenon, as long as the girls are paid for service. According to Van der Donck, they would be ready to share their body under any circumstances, without resisting: 'most of the time men are welcome, the girls are utterly free in this respect, and they won't refuse, and all of them will act as prostitutes'.¹⁹ In this respect, the text even anticipates the uncomfortable effects of this representation, in the topical category of physical health care. Among the Indians, Van der Donck writes, venereal diseases like Gonorrhea or Syphilis are easily and successfully cured by the use of indigenous herbs: 'Sometimes they do this so readily that Italian doctors could learn from them'.²⁰

Finally, the indigenous women feature favorably in the most threatening of all ethnographic categories, Indian warfare and weaponry. With the recent bloody Kieft-wars and the horrible tactics of nightly assaults and guerrilla wars, the *Description* could not deny nor omit the facts here, even though the images were a nightmare for people considering emigration. However, in order to temper any frightened reactions, Van der Donck assures the reader that the Indians were

de meenichte van *Neerlantsche* Vrouwen daer te bekomen waren) daer seer op verslingerde / haer aengesichten en tronien / zijn als hare en verscheyden als hier te Lande / selden uytsteekende schoon ende noch minder uytmunten de leelijck/ doch als sy geoeffent werden als die van onse Vrouwen/ zouden sonder twijffel weyigh ofte niet van hier verschillen'.

¹⁹ Ibid., 61: 'Maer als zy Vrijsters ofte andersins ongebondene zijn/ is daer niet aen ghelegen/ sy mogen dan doen soo het haer ghelieft/ als sy haer daer voor maer laten betalen/ voor niet houden sy het schandaleus en Hoerachtigh te zijn/ de reste wort niet qualijck genomen als het haer gebeuren magh. [...] Het gebeurt oock wel dat een vrye Vrouws-persoon wel een tijdt by yemant sal slapen en de Hoere daer van zijn/ soo langh hy haer te vreden stelt/ en ghenoegh geeft/ daer sy nochtans niet mede zoude willen Trouwen.' This notion was repeated by Van der Donck in *ibid.*, p. 63: 'Als alles wel is/ en sy aen niemant verbonden zijn/ spelen zy meest alle van de lichten aen/ en zijn geweldigh liberael over dat werck/ by tijden ende wijlen sullen sy geen tocht weygeren/ en meest alle soo meenigh alser zijn/ van kant aen de Hoer spelen'.

²⁰ Ibid., 69: '[Sij] ghenesen oock dickwijls Clap-ooren en alle andere diergelijcke Venus-vruchten/ somtijds wel soo ghemackelijck/ datse meenigh/ *Italiaens Meester*, daer in souden beschamen/ in dit alles doen se met Kruyden Wortelen/ Bladen en diergelijcke dat het Landt haer gheeft'.

no match in open warfare, through lack of any military structures or hierarchy on their side.²¹ As for the unexpected attacks, Europeans did not have to fear either, he writes, because they would be warned by the Indian girls: 'The native men will not easily reveal their secret assaults to us, but they will to their women. And as soon as the women know, they will tell the Europeans (whom they love in general), fearing an assault will be to their own disadvantage'.²² This creative addition, which again activates the image of New Netherland's indigenous women and Dutch men in a peculiar relationship, was a cheap trick. But, then again, the *Description of New Netherland* was a cheap persuasive book.

Amsterdam's Comfortable Taste of Exoticism

The Amsterdam emigration program for New Netherland, enhanced by Van der Donck's convincing images of a land of opportunities, did have its effects. From 1655 onward, during the final decade of New Netherland, significantly more people settled in the colony. However, the emigration came to a halt at the dawn of the second Dutch-Anglo War in 1664, when New Amsterdam was taken by the English, renam-

²¹ Ibid., 72: "Van hare oorlogen en wapen". This is repeated in the Dialogue section of the same book, 95: 'Wat de naturellen ofte Indianen aengaet daer is niet veel aen vast/ zij sien nu selfs wel dat haer dingen niet veel te beduyden hebben en anders niet zijn als om een Branthout of een nieuw aenkomer die niet beter weet verbaest te maecken/ leest inde Beschrijvinge van Nieuw Nederlandt, onder den tijtel van hare Oorlogen/ ghy sult sien datse geen Regimenten/Compagnien of Geleederen formeeren können/ endatse den eenen over den anderen te weynigh ghesagh hebben/ soo dat sij niet können uytrecten/ ten anderen den Oorlogh laetstleden met haer gevoert/ doen wij niet half soo sterck van Menschen waren als nu/ heucht haer noch soo wel datse niet licht yet sullen beginnen'. (As for the Naturels or Indians, they are not a great danger. They know by now that they are no serious factor, even if they might frighten a Coward or an inexperienced newcomer. Read about this in the chapter about their Warfare, where you will find that they do not fight in well ordered regiments, and they know not of any military hierarchy either, thus being quite harmless. We have had recent wars, when we were much fewer people then, and the memory thereof will stop them from starting any fight).

²² Ibid., 72: 'Sy zijn furieus genoeg in het eerste aenvallen/ en onghenadighe overwinners/ listigh om hare aenslagen te beleggen/ en als die ghevaerlijck zijn voeren zyse gemeenlijck ter sluyck/ seer stil en by nacht uyt: practiseren altijd hinderlagen te leggen en haer vyandt te verschalcken/ maer voor de vuyst/ in het vlacke Veldt ofte Water zijn het sonderlinge geen Soldaten / maer wel gewoon het loopen in tijds ghebruycken/ of sy moeten beset zijn/ dan vechten zy hartneckelijck tot den laetsten man/ soo langh sy eenighsins staen können. [...] De Mans sullen aen de onse niet licht enige aenslagen openbaren/ maer wel aen hare Vrouwen/ en die weten het soo ras niet of zy sullen het den Christenen (daer zy in 't gemeen veel van houden) te kennen geven/ soo sy maer oordeelen het eenighsins tot haren naerdeel kan strecken'.

ing the city on Manhattan and its vast surrounding territories to its present name. After the Peace of Breda in 1667, when New York was definitely recognized as English territory, most of the former colonists chose to stay, but it was Britain that took up the population of the area. For that matter, representations of New York began being made for the English market, just as they had previously been produced in Amsterdam. The English, however, did not build up these images from scratch. Just as they took over New Netherland, they also appropriated Dutch descriptions of the area. As a prime source of information, Adriaen van der Donck's *Description of New Netherland* played a dominant role in that unique Dutch-Anglo interference and knowledge transfer.

The original author, however, did not live to witness his London debut. He had died in the colony, soon after his return from Amsterdam somewhere around 1655. Likewise, his publisher Nieuwenhof, who had been so active in the emigration book market, had left the stage.²³ Moreover, the patent of the *Description of New Netherland* that was about to end in 1670, did not seem to be a priority for the West India Company anymore, since it had lost the desire to assert its intellectual rights after the loss of the colony. Therefore, the text was beyond control and consequently appeared in various books and with different adaptations.

Before crossing the Channel and entering the English book market, Van der Donck's representation first went through a remarkable make over in Amsterdam. In 1671 the Dutch compiler Arnoldus Montanus adapted the *Description* for his vast volume *The New and Unknown World, or the Description of America and the South Land*.²⁴ Thus, the information on New Netherland which had functioned as a stand alone description addressing common readers in the social context of an emigration program was integrated into a full scale overview of the Transatlantic World, meant for the eyes of the lucky few. The editor involved was Jacob van Meurs (or Meursius). Renowned in the Amsterdam top market printing business and a skilful engraver, Van Meurs produced major historical and geographical works and travelogues with dazzling illustrations to visualize the distant world. So, Adriaen van der

²³ The Short Title Catalogue Netherlands does not give any Nieuwenhof publications after 1663.

²⁴ Montanus A., *De nieuwe en onbekende weereld: of Beschryving van America en 't Zuidland: vervaetende d'oorsprong der Americaenen en Zuidlanders, gedenkwaerdige togten derwaerds* [etc.] (Amsterdam, J. Meurs: 1671).

Donck's sober *Description of New Netherland* made its appearance in a luxury folio volume, in two-color printing with fine engravings.

As for the textual images of New Netherland, the Montanus-Meurs production epitomizes the *Description* by following the topical categories set out by Van der Donck. Thus, readers find all the animal species, plants and minerals as featured in the earlier work. Additions are few, but significant. First of all, the history of the colony, as it had been written by Van der Donck, has been updated for the last decade. The insertion focuses, however, on Amsterdam rather than New Amsterdam, as it describes the City's involvement in the recent New Netherland emigration program.²⁵ For that matter, also, the exact number is given for the first wave of City emigrants that boarded the December fleet of 1656: 'seventy households and also three hundred *Waldensen* [exiled protestant refugees] from Piemonte'. This first fleet was followed, according to the historical update, by a prosperous growth in New Netherland's population in the years after. The most recent information reported in the book, however, is that the colony had gone over to the English and that for the colonists under their new masters, life in New York was hard, since trade to the home country had come to a stop.

Just as this historical update was formulated at the working desk in Amsterdam rather than based on an overseas eyewitness account, so too was the newly added paragraph picturing the city of New Amsterdam or New York.²⁶ Again, the insertion does not adopt any fresh transatlantic information at all and is rather a complementary textual interpretation or *legenda* of the city's view which was taken from the map in Van der Donck's second edition [Fig. 3].

²⁵ Ibid., 134, left and right column: 'De goede gronde en gelegendheid van *Nieuw-Nederland* maeckte d'Amsterdamsche Burgemeesteren gaende, om derwaerds een volksplanting af te vaerdigen. Weshalven [sij] verdraegen met de West-Indische Maetschappy, onder goedvinden der Algemeine Staeten in 's-Graeven-Hage. Op 't jaer sestig honderd ses en vijftig scheepten dieshalven seventig huisgesinnen, waer by sich voegden drie honderd verdrevene Waldensen uit Piemont, na Nieuw Nederland over. Den vijftienden van Wintermaend staptenze by trommelslag binnen scheepsboord. De volkplanting sette gelukkig voort: als ondertusschen d'oorlog tusschen d'Engelsche Kroon en 't Vereenigde Nederland opstond: sulx na een tien-jaerig besit, onmagtig tegen d'Engelsche, haer aen die landaerd over gaf. Zedert kreeg Nieuw-Amsterdam de benaming Nieuw Jork. De verheerde ingezetenen vervielen tot groote ongelegendheid, alsoo de koophandel t'eenmael stil stond'.

²⁶ Ibid., 123, right column.

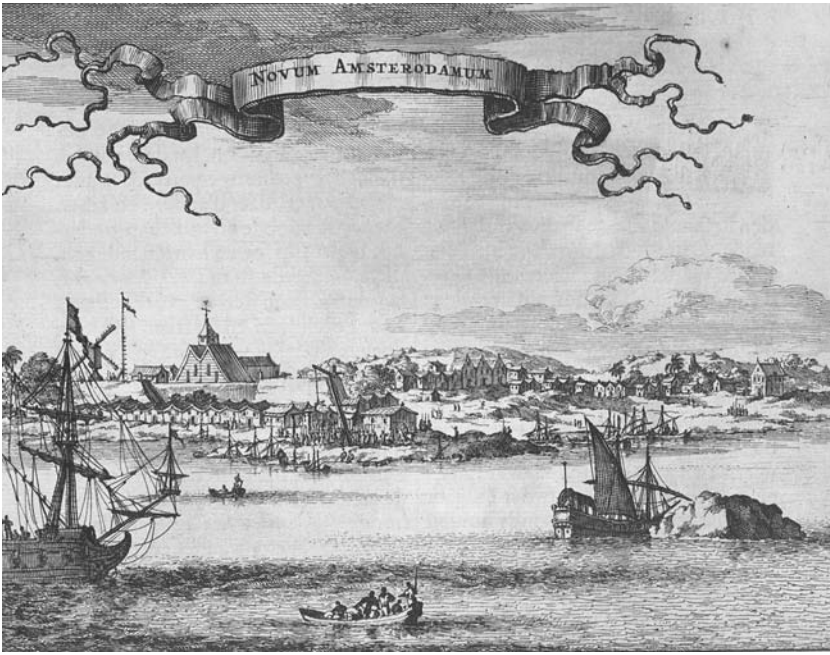


Fig. 3. Anonymous, *View on Nieuw Amsterdam*, engraving published by Jacob van Meurs in the luxury volume *De nieuwe en onbekende weereld: of Beschryving van America en 't Zuid-land* (Amsterdam, Jacob van Meurs: 1671), 124. Amsterdam, University Library.

Although this addition in itself does not give any new information, the visual image of New Amsterdam as copied from the *Description*, is slightly adapted. Remarkably, palm trees are depicted in New York.²⁷ With that visual element, Arnoldus Montanus, or rather his engraver-publisher Jacob van Meurs, was perhaps trying to meet the exotic expectations of his comfortable readers in Amsterdam. In any case, the manipulative strategy is also at work in the catalogue of animals. In addition to all the creatures mentioned by Van der Donck, Montanus inserts an animal which the eyewitness source had failed to notice during his nine year's stay in the colony: the unicorn.²⁸ Montanus and Meurs thus brought the exotic animal *par excellence* before their readers' eyes, both in text and in an engraving.

²⁷ Ibid., 124.

²⁸ Ibid., 125, with illustration on 126.

In a more subtle way, the indigenous people of New Netherland, too, are transformed into this exotic mode of stereotyping. In this respect, Van der Donck's focus on the Indian's attractiveness is structurally stripped off. In their appearance, for example, Montanus closely copies Van der Donck, but he leaves out a positive evaluation like 'they all, both men and women, have beautiful faces'.²⁹ Likewise, the indigenous women and their liberal attitude towards sex, which Van der Donck had used as a selling point, are castigated. When describing their ways of face painting, Montanus uses his source very selectively: he copies the phrase that the painted faces looked very noble (in Dutch 'staedig'), but he leaves out the fact that Van der Donck had characterized those distinguished looks as false to their moral behavior: 'they then may look very honorable, decent and noble. In fact, all lasciviousness seems to be completely absent now, more than it is, as a matter of fact.' Also, Montanus is significantly selective in copying the passages about the native women in times of breast feeding or monthly periods.³⁰ Both authors, in this respect, remark that the women did not have sex during these periods. But Montanus cuts the additional remark, that for all other occasions they were extremely liberal, having mostly, as Van der Donck writes, 'the lights on'.

Thus, the Montanus-Meurs production revived Van der Donck's persuasive eyewitness account only to a certain extent. At their working desks in Amsterdam, they re-created this distant world with its exotic stereotypes. In accordance, some fantasy elements were inserted, like palm trees and unicorns. Also, the Native Americans were remodeled. Van der Donck's positive attitude was replaced by a rather flat type-cast description in which a common European disapproval of primitive people prevailed. After all, that was the 'exotic taste' of well-to-do readers in Amsterdam, who preferred traveling imaginatively, and thus stereotypically, to the other side of the ocean.

²⁹ Ibid., 125, 129, left column: "Gestalte der Nieuw Nederlanders". Omitted is the Van der Donck phrase 'Sij hebben alle so Mans als Vrouwen schoon gesicht'.

³⁰ Ibid., 125, 131, right column, leaving out the Van der Donck phrases: 'Als alles wel is, en sij aen niemant verbonden zijn, spelen zij meest alle van de lichten aen, en zijn (soo wel vrouwen als mannen) geweldigh liberael over dat werck, zonder eenighe schaamte te hebben [...] Maer by tijden ende wijlen sullen sij geen tocht weiygeren, en meest alle soo meenigh alser zijn, van kant aen de Hoer spelen'.

The London Transfer

Almost simultaneously to the modified Amsterdam publication, the Dutch textual and visual images of New Netherland made their way to England, where public information about the New York territory was highly wanting since the seizure of the colony in 1664 and the official recognition three years later. It was the British writer John Ogilby who translated Montanus's work in his famous overall description of the New World, *America* (1671).³¹ Ogilby was a prolific translator, editor and publisher of illustrated geographical works, just as the Montanus-Meurs company was in Amsterdam. So, again, the English description of New York was not a traveler's account. *America* was compiled from 'most authentick authors' as the title page mentions, 'augmented with later observations, and adorned with maps and sculptures'.

The geographical map that opens the New York section is the unmodified copy from Montanus; even the former names of 'Nova Belgica' and 'Nieuw Nederlandt', which England's appropriation program had deliberately changed, were left in tact in the engraving, just like the Dutch spelling of the neighboring territory of 'Nieuw Engelandt'. The other engravings in the chapter, too, are copied, as is the whole of the Montanus-Meurs text on flora and fauna and the indigenous inhabitants. People in England, too, could see and read that there would be palm trees in Manhattan and unicorns in New Yorkshire. Likewise, London readers were provided with the same stereotypes of the indigenous people that had met with reader's expectations in Amsterdam before. After all, Ogilby, too, was a top market book entrepreneur, styling himself as His Majesty's Cosmographer and Geographic Printer.

But this was only true in part. Ogilby's description of New York shows a remarkable imbalance compared to its Dutch source. Preceding the translated part, the text inserts a second, less comfortable voice. The chapter opens with a history of the colony, which denies all West India Company claims ever made there. The traditional Dutch argument, that the land was discovered during an exploration commissioned by a Dutch Company, is neutralized in the statement that Henry Hudson was an Englishman, 'acting all that he did by

³¹ Ogilby J., *America: being the latest, and most accurate Description of the New World* [etc.] (London, John Ogilby: 1671).

commission of the King of England'.³² The 1664 seizure, therefore, was 'an undoubted right', according to the King's 'just pretences to all that usurped territory called New Netherland'. Consequently, it was thought fit not only to change the Dutch place names, but also to alter the magisterial structure of the territory, so that 'all civil policy is conformable to the methods and practice of England'. Thus, the insertion rewrites the traditional history, clearing the area of any Dutch claims and names, and presents a safe, fully recognizable English framework.

Next to the historiography, the description of New York City also takes on an English coloring.³³ It is described as a considerable town, with 'fair streets and several good houses'; whereas 'the rest are built much after the manner of Holland, to the number of about four hundred houses'. Obviously, this representation places the Dutch and their former house building on a secondary level, even the store houses of the West India Company. Likewise, two major New York landmarks dating from the Dutch period, the Reformed Church and the wind mill, are ignored in the description. In stead, full focus is on the fortress, now called St. James's and portrayed as an invincible stronghold and a guarantee of safety, with its capacity of three hundred soldiers and officers, furnished with arms and ammunition, its four bastions, walls of stone lined with a thick rampart of earth and its fresh water well. Security is also the theme in the final lines about the city's position in the bay, affording 'a safe entrance, even to unskillful pilots', where in lee of the town side 'ships of any burthen may ride secure against any storms'.

This new voice, which stresses Englishness and security, is also heard in the concluding part of the chapter on New York. Here, following the descriptive part on flora, fauna and indigenous people, Ogilby's text continues with a geographical survey of New Yorkshire.³⁴ All over the territory, tracks of land are indicated and qualified in terms of 'excellent good land, and good conveniences for the settling of several towns'. The borders of the Hudson River stretching over a hundred miles towards Albany, offer 'as good Corn land as the World affords, enough to entertain hundreds of families'. Likewise, to the west

³² Ibid., 168.

³³ Ibid., 169.

³⁴ Ibid., 180–81.

another river would offer spacious meadows on both sides, 'enough to feed thousands of cattle' as well as 'capable for the erecting of several towns'. In fact, this areal survey did not meet the expectations of well-to-do home readers, but offered instead detailed settling information in a catalogue for colonists.

A Second Opinion: New York in the Eyes of the Beholder

The newly inserted elements in Ogilby's description of New York have perceptibly nothing in common with the themes and tone of the main body based on Montanus. The opening paragraph with the historiography and description of New York City focuses on the Englishness of the territory, and the theme of security and reliability. Likewise, the final survey of the land is written for the sake of emigration. The explanation for this two-sided voice in Ogilby's description of New York, is that the compiler used a second current text. Contemporary to the Montanus publication in Amsterdam, London had witnessed the publication of *A brief Description of New York, formerly called New Netherland* (London: 1670). Its author was Daniel Denton, who had gone to America in 1640, and served as a Justice of the Peace in New York since the beginning of the English administration. Denton, therefore, was an eyewitness of New York (like Adriaen van der Donck had been fifteen years before) who went back to England in 1670 to set up settlement enterprises. His book, too, was a stand alone representation and, also similar to Van der Donck, the text was a low-market oriented publication addressing common people, in low-cost printing work without engravings. The *Brief description of New York* mentions these social pragmatics on its title page. It focuses on New York's 'situation, fertility of the soyle, healthfulness of the climate and the commodities thence produced', a phrase resembling the way in which Van der Donck introduces his *Description of New Netherland*. Moreover, Denton's book offers 'some directions and advice to such as shall go thither', as well as 'an account of what commodities they shall take with them'. In this respect too, Denton echoes his Dutch counterpart, whose second edition had incorporated the *Conditions* with practical information, rules and guidelines for emigration [fig. 4].

In spite of a similar agenda, the main difference between the two authors lies with the way in which Denton models the indigenous people to suit the purpose of his book. The Indians, in his view, are

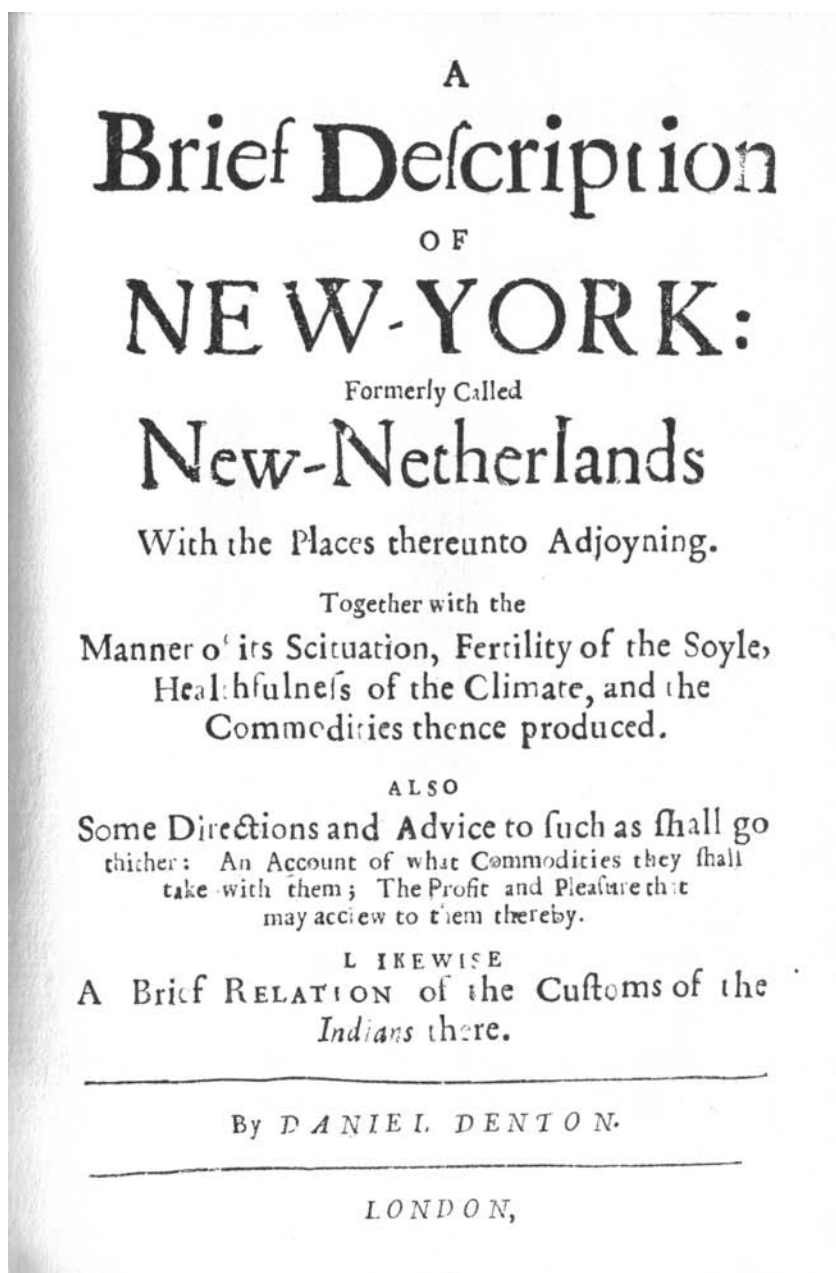


Fig. 4. Daniel Denton, *A Brief Description of New York, Formerly called New Netherlands* [etc.] (London, John Hancock: 1670). San Marino CA, The Huntington Library.

‘but few, and those few no ways hurtful but rather serviceable to the English’.³⁵ It is telling, in this respect, that Denton does not give the people a face in his description. Readers do not get any clue about their physical appearance. Moreover, in Denton’s account of their customs, the Indians play football or cards for recreation, ‘at which they will play away all they have’.³⁶ Likewise, they are, in his words, great lovers of strong drink, killing each other in drunken matches. Also, they are portrayed as utterly corrupted in their religious affairs, in social matters like matrimony and even in their healthcare.

In particular, Denton focuses on their relation to the colonists, describing them as peaceful Indians, who ‘have not resisted or disturb’d any Christians there in the settling or peaceable possessing of any lands’.³⁷ As part of this argument, they are made virtually harmless as a threat to the settlers: ‘Here one may lodge in the fields and woods, travel from one end of the countrey to another, with as much security as if he were lock’d within his own Chamber: and if one chance to meet with an Indian town, they shall give him the best entertainment they have, and upon his desire direct him on his way’.³⁸

In Denton’s representation, the Indians, for the first time in the tradition of describing the colony, were marginalized. Van der Donck had portrayed them at large as a people of flesh and blood, an autonomous and significant factor in the colony, both in numbers and in physical presence and in economic importance. After him, Arnoldus Montanus had adapted the portrait to meet Amsterdam’s stereotypical taste for exotic people. And now, in London, they were finally stripped of their dignity and depicted at the edge of extinction. The overall message of Denton’s representation intimated that security was guaranteed for settlers and that the indigenous people had already lost the game, as his description of the Natives opens with this horrifying belief in manifest destiny: ‘it is to be admired, how strangely the Natives have decreast by the Hand of God, since the English first settling of those parts. [...] It has been generally observed, that where the English come to settle, a Divine Hand makes way for them, by

³⁵ All quotations in this paragraph taken from Denton D., *A Brief Description of New York, Formerly called New Netherlands* [etc.] (London, John Hancock and William Bradley: 1670) 6–8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

removing or cutting of the Indians, either by wars one with the other, or by some raging mortal disease.’³⁹

Having espoused this tragic idea, it may be clear why John Ogilby in his compilation volume *America* did not solely rely on either Denton or Montanus as his source for the description of New York. Montanus after all was a Dutch description meant for a Dutch audience. It surely needed to be adapted to the new state in the colony, and most of all to its new readers. Therefore, his fellow countryman’s recent description was useful for its ‘Anglicized’ historiography, as well as for the most recent eyewitness state and survey of the colony. On the other hand, however, Denton did not offer the elements needed for a full survey of living nature and ethnography meeting the top market standards of well to do readers. Those elements, as well as the imaginative illustrations, were gathered from the Dutch tradition as formulated in the recent publication by Montanus.

Epilogue

The history of representations of New Netherland and New York shows that a widespread public image of this part of the new world was generated only when the WIC’s position was weakening and its restrictive policy on trade and population in New Netherland got challenged by other players, such as the City of Amsterdam and the States-General in The Hague. Adriaen van der Donck’s eyewitness *Description of New Netherland* (1655) may be regarded as the main source of information, both for its timing, its popularity and its many-sided afterlife. As it was emigration in the first place that urged the need for descriptions, maps and pictures of the colony, this particular agenda ruled the exposé by Van der Donck, both for its historiography, the display of its natural resources and potential, and the portrayal of the native people.

For Amsterdam, the interest of emigration ended in 1664. Consequently, descriptions of New Netherland for lower class readers dried up, while the cheap Van der Donck original was converted into luxury editions meeting the standards of stereotypical exotism. Meanwhile, the English administration over New York urged the need for information on the other side of the Canal. But different from the earlier

³⁹ Ibid., 6–7.

Amsterdam situation, the London images and texts were created both from new data and from recycling the Dutch tradition. The import of Dutch information on the New World, however, was a very discriminating process. Dutch elements in the image of the colony would not survive, neither in historiography nor in the textual picture of New York City.

Simultaneously, a new eyewitness account for lower class London praised the colony for its peace and comfort under English administration, and, therefore, as an excellent place for emigration. Again, human, European aspects of the new world proved to be one of the most fashionable categories, since the Dutchness was marginalized in its history, social structures and cityscape. However, another striking contrast to Van der Donck's composition was the reshaping of the indigenous people for the purpose of the picture, as a virtually non-existent entity.

The ultimate representation of New York in John Ogilby's *America* of 1671 staged all different shapes of the Van der Donck text since its first publication 15 years before. Elements closest to the original were the observations on landscape, flora and fauna. They offered apolitical information for any kind of reader, be it high or low class, Dutch or English. Major re-fashioning, on the other hand, resulted from the change in functionality. In its afterlife the rhetoric of representation was adapted for new social groups of intended readers, in a new political environment. In the long process, passing through the hands of various authors with different agenda's, the remainders of Adriaen van der Donck's *Description* ended up in a peculiar amalgam of eyewitness observations, persuasive emigration propaganda, armchair exotism, and English-Dutch antagonism: a most hybrid composition and, at points, an uncomfortable mix of images.

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ASIA

PIRACY AND PLAY: TWO CATHOLIC APPROPRIATIONS OF NIEUHOFF'S *GEZANTSCHAP**

Paul Arblaster

Johan Nieuhof's report of a VOC embassy to Beijing, printed in Amsterdam in 1665, was one of the most influential works of its time on Western perceptions of China. It drew extensively on previous works by Jesuit authors, but Nieuhof was also convinced that the Jesuits at the imperial court had misrepresented the Dutch to the Emperor, and at the climax of his narrative he broke out into a diatribe against them. The passage was omitted from the piratical Antwerp reprint, which added fourteen new chapters under the heading 'The Progress of the Christian Faith in China due to the Labours of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus'. A slightly less transparent Catholic response was one of the last plays written by Joost van den Vondel. In 1667 he published the closet drama *Zungchin or Downfall of the Chinese Government*. For Vondel, too, this is little more than a hook on which to hang a paean of praise for the Jesuit missionaries that Nieuhof had maligned. Where there was, by the mid-seventeenth century, an extensive communication system within Europe, news from beyond the European area was channeled through specialized networks, mediated by 'gate-keepers' who saw to it that only such news was publicized as served the purpose of the global corporation they represented – whether it was a state, a trading company, or a missionary order. It is only rarely, as in the Catholic appropriations of Nieuhof's work, that we see directly conflicting interpretations of overseas encounters.

* I would like to express my gratitude to Nigel Danby, Noël Golvers, Catherine Jami, Joe Munitiz and Nicolas Standaert for their advice on specific points; also to Brendan Dooley, to Mordechai Feingold and Geert Vanpaemel, to Victor Houliston, to Pauline Tam, and to Romana Zacchi for opportunities to present and discuss different issues and ideas behind this paper with various academic audiences in conferences and seminars held at Jacobs University Bremen, the K.U. Leuven, the University of the Witwatersrand, Peking University, and the University of Bologna.

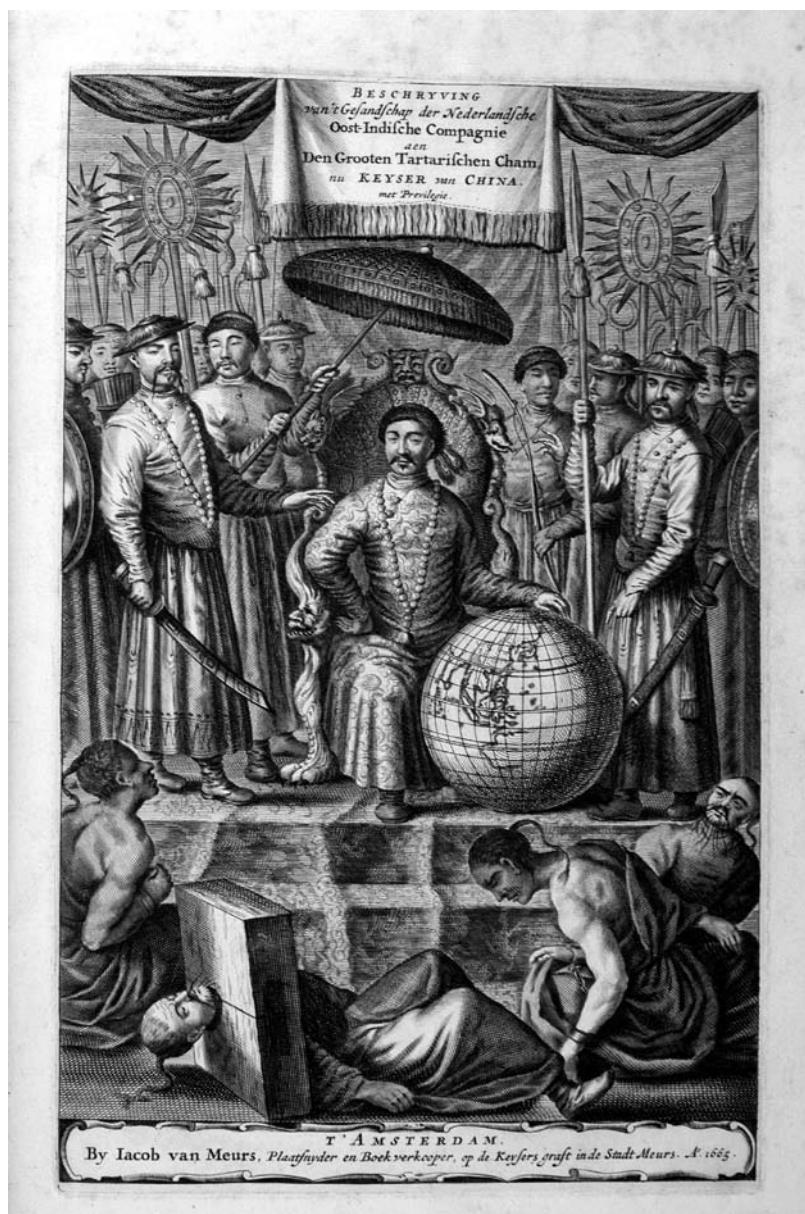


Fig. 1. Anonymous, Frontispiece to Johan Nieuhof's *Het gezantschap der Neêrlandische Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China* (Amsterdam, Jacob Meurs: 1665), Amsterdam, University Library. The image represents the most powerful government in the Eastern Hemisphere.

The European News System

The newspapers of the middle decades of the seventeenth century display in their content and datelines the existence and workings of a ramified system for public communication within Europe, an interconnected series of networks with nodes in all the major trading cities and princely residences – ‘ports and courts’ – of Western and Central Europe, from Lisbon to Riga and from Naples to Edinburgh.¹ The proliferation of interconnecting and competing carrying services, whether royal or state posts, civic carriers, or private ventures, meant that this system increasingly had redundancy built in, so that failures of connections in one part of the network (due to war, pestilence, flood, or other disasters) could be compensated in others. It could be assumed with some confidence that major public events in any part of Western or Central Europe would become known throughout the system within a period of weeks. This was a network that cut across confessional and political boundaries, so that newspapers regularly printed reports reflecting different political and religious views.

Only where partisan confessional or dynastic interests were involved would editors make much of an effort to provide verification or interpretation, otherwise generally seeing their job as publishing whatever credible reports were circulating, and leaving the rest to the reader's discretion. Very occasionally this assumption is made explicit, as in the advice of Pierre Hugonet, editor of the *Relations véritables* published twice weekly in Brussels, that he was aware of the discrepancies between reports but that ‘Des uns & des autres vous formerez tel jugement qu'il vous plaira pour y discerner la vérité’.²

News from outside Europe was a rather different matter, not being available regularly nor, in most cases, by channels that provided a wealth of conflicting detail or interpretation. Those extra-European reports that did become available were almost entirely fed into the network at a few key points – most importantly Rome, Amsterdam and Seville – and were filtered by various institutional actors, each

¹ See Arblaster P., ‘Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers: England in a European System of Communications’, *Media History* 11 (2005) 21–36; reprinted in Raymond J. (ed.), *News Networks in Seventeenth-Century Britain and Europe* (London – New York: 2006) 19–34.

² Note concerning conflicting accounts of a naval engagement off Livorno in the first Anglo-Dutch War, printed at the end of *Relations véritables*, 29 March 1653.

with their own interests in publicizing or suppressing particular stories. By the mid-17th century the outline of the known world had almost reached its present extent, but only a tiny part of it was linked up to the European news cycle. It should speak for itself that there were other news networks and other news cycles beyond Europe, but my own research interest is in the interaction between the European communication system and extra-European news.

Two of the institutional providers of extra-European news, and in many ways the main two, were the VOC and the Society of Jesus. At least, it seems a fair inference that newspaper stories datelined Rome detailing the achievements of Jesuits, and stories datelined Amsterdam publicizing news that would be welcome to VOC shareholders, were indeed 'fed in' by these institutions for their own purposes. It was only when two European overseas institutions clashed directly that conflicting reports would circulate in European news publications. A good example of such a clash in the early days of newspaper publishing is coverage of the Amboyna Massacre, an incident in March 1623 whereby Dutch merchants put to death ten English merchants, nine Japanese mercenaries, and one of their own employees, suspecting them of plotting to seize control of the Dutch fort.³ The precise course of events and the justice of the executions remained controversial to the end of the century.

The importance of institutional actors as conduits for public information was not by any means limited to the newspaper press, as the present volume makes abundantly clear. A number of servants of the VOC, and a number of Jesuit missionaries, brought forth publications in their own name, and the information provided by them was picked up and combined by other writers. The first maritime atlas on the Mercator projection, in the sixth part of Sir Robert Dudley's *Dell'Arcano del Mare* (a work printed in Florence in 1646–47)⁴ draws on Dudley's own experience as a navigator and that of his associates, but combines this with information drawn from other sources, including both the latest Dutch voyages and Jesuit communications.⁵

³ Markley R., *The Far East and the English Imagination, 1600–1730* (Cambridge: 2006) 149–153.

⁴ Lord Wardington, "Sir Robert Dudley and the *Arcano del Mare*, 1646–8 and 1661", *Book Collector* 52, 2 (2003) 199–211.

⁵ Crone G.R., "The Discovery of Tasmania and New Zealand", *Geographical Journal* 111, 4/6 (1948) 257–263; Schütte J.F., "Japanese Cartography at the Court of Florence: Robert Dudley's Maps of Japan, 1606–1636", *Imago Mundi* 23 (1969) 29–58.

The sometimes conflicting imperatives of publication and secrecy, a recurring paradox in early modern thought on Reason of State, were as real to international institutions as to any prince or councilor.⁶ In 1628, when Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, asked his personal secretary Constantijn Huygens to brief him on Dutch activities overseas, Huygens turned to an old friend, Willem Boreel, a lawyer retained by both the VOC and the City of Amsterdam.⁷ Boreel provided Huygens with a reading list of published works about the East and West Indies, but he went further than this, sending a manuscript history of Hindustan, with the caution that while he might use the manuscript to brief the prince, he should see that nobody else had access to it, since it contained commercially sensitive information. Given the emphasis on commercial and military secrecy, it can surely be no coincidence that the first comprehensive collection of maritime charts on the Mercator projection to be made available in print was published not in Spain, Portugal, England, or even the Netherlands, but in Florence, where any official interest in long-distance exploration had died with Grand Duke Ferdinando I in 1609.

The Jesuits were just as selective in their communications. The constitutions of the Society of Jesus provided that corporate morale be built up by the circulation throughout the society of annual letters of edifying news from each province – a novel stipulation in religious life and one of the things that made Jesuits particularly conscious of belonging to a peculiarly modern and global organization.⁸ The emphasis, however, was very much on edification, rather than full disclosure: anything unedifying was restricted to confidential correspondence, often written in code, between the General and the various provincials. The edifying letters were soon being printed, partly to aid fund-raising and recruitment drives, partly to raise the profile of the often-beleaguered Society's activities. The practice reached its apogee in the eighteenth century, with the thirty-four volumes of *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* from the Jesuit mission in China, printed between 1703 and 1776.

⁶ See e.g. Arblaster P., "Dat de boecken vrij sullen wesen: Private Profit, Public Utility and Secrets of State in the Seventeenth-Century Habsburg Netherlands", in Koopmans J.W. (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, Groningen Studies in Cultural Change 14 (Leuven: 2005) 79–95.

⁷ Worp J.A. (ed.), *De briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens (1608–1687)* (The Hague: 1911–1917), vol. I, 237–240.

⁸ *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, tr. George Ganss (St Louis: 1996) §673, §675.

Although the roots and *raisons d'être* of the Society of Jesus and of the Dutch trading companies were not only different but in a certain measure antagonistic, in the middle decades of the seventeenth century a small degree of synergy developed between them. Just one of the various sources of friction between the Jesuits and the secular priests of the clandestine Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic was that the austere leader of the seculars, the Vicar Apostolic Sasbout Vosmeer, had laid down that holding shares in the VOC should be accounted a sin – a view not taken by Jesuit confessors, who were to become notorious for their alleged laxity.⁹ Mostly, Catholic missionaries and Protestant merchants moved in separate spheres, but in Japan the Dutch helped destroy the last vestiges of the openly Christian culture established there by Jesuit missionaries, while elsewhere in East and South-East Asia Jesuits might travel, or send their letters, by VOC ships, and servants of the VOC might buy Jesuit publications to gain insight into the lands and peoples with whom contact was shared.

Nieuhof's Gezantschap

Among the major contributions to Western knowledge facilitated by the Dutch trading companies, Johan Nieuhof's report of a VOC embassy to China holds a secure place.¹⁰ Had the embassy succeeded in its aim of obtaining permission for the Dutch to trade freely on the Chinese coast and send a trade mission to Beijing once every five years, Nieuhof's report might well have been treated with the same careful confidentiality as the manuscript history of Hindustan that Boreel had lent to Huygens. As it was, the Dutch not only failed to get a foot in the door at Canton, but a few years later lost their toehold in Formosa. Under these circumstances, company interests would not be harmed and might well be served by making Nieuhof's eyewitness observations available to the public at large. It was duly published in Dutch, and within a very few years in a number of other languages.

⁹ Rogier L.J., *Geschiedenis van het katholicisme in Noord-Nederland in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam – Brussels: 1964) vol. III, 530.

¹⁰ On the embassy see Wills J.E. jr, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666–1687* (Cambridge MA: 1984) 38–82; for Nieuhof's account, Blussé L. – Falkenburg R. (eds.), *Johan Nieuhofs beelden van een Chinareis, 1655–1657* (Middelburg: 1987).

The title of the English translation gives some idea of the contents: *An embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China: deliver'd by their excellencies, Peter de Goyer and Jacob de Keyzer, at his imperial city of Peking: wherein the cities, towns, villages, ports, rivers, &c. in their passages from Canton to Peking are ingeniously describ'd*. This is not the full title, but the rest of the subtitle will be left for a little later. The subtitle of the original Dutch edition is even fuller, ending with the phrase: 'As well as an accurate description of Chinese cities, villages, government, sciences, crafts, manners, religions, buildings, clothing, ships, mountains, crops, animals etcetera, and wars with the Tartars'.

The work was first published in Amsterdam by Jacob van Meurs in 1665, under the title *Het gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China* [...]. A French translation, *L'Ambassade de la Compagnie Oriental des Provinces Unies vers L'empereur de la Chine*, was printed at Leiden the same year. In 1666 Van Meurs brought out a German translation (*Die Gesantschaft der Ost-Indischen Gesellschaft* etc.), while the French translation was reprinted in Paris, and the Dutch version was reprinted in Antwerp with some significant cuts and additions, which will be discussed further in a moment. A Latin translation followed in 1668, *Legatio Batavica ad magnum Tartarae Chamun*, and the first edition of the English translation came out in 1669.¹¹

The greatest selling-point of the work was the 150 finely engraved illustrations, engravings that were to be one of the strongest influences on Western visualizations of China for the next 150 years.¹² Nieuhof justifiably boasted that of all the Europeans who had written on China before him, only three (coincidentally all of them Jesuits) had provided reliable information. The *Gezantschap* was in two parts. The first, describing the embassy's journey from Canton to Beijing, was based on Nieuhof's personal observations of that route, and his description of the time spent at the imperial court, attempting to initiate negotiations for a trade treaty.

¹¹ There is some discussion of the work and of its impact in England in Markley, *The Far East* 104–129.

¹² On these illustrations, see Ulrichs F., *Johan Nieuhoofs Blick auf China (1655–1657): die Kupferstiche in seinem Chinabuch und ihre Wirkung auf den Verleger Jacob van Meurs*, *Sinologica Coloniensia* 21 (Wiesbaden: 2003).

The second part, providing a more general overview of Chinese customs, produce, houses, religion, and so forth, and a brief history of the Manchu conquest, was explicitly indebted to the publications of Jesuits from the China Mission: the Fleming Nicholas Trigault, author of *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas* (Augsburg: 1615); the Portuguese Alvarez Semedo, author of *Imperio de la China* (Rome, 1642); and the Italian Martino Martini, author of a history of the Manchu conquest, *De Bello Tartarico* (Antwerp: 1654) and a general description of the country, *Novus atlas sinesis* (Amsterdam: 1655).¹³ Not only were VOC employees using Jesuit publications in their reconnaissance of China, the decision to send an embassy at all was the result of news that China's new Manchu rulers might be more receptive to Dutch trade overtures than their Ming predecessors had shown themselves. This news was passed on in Batavia by a Jesuit *en route* to Europe, indeed none other than Martino Martini himself, whose *De Bello Tartarico* and *Atlas* were written on the voyage.¹⁴

But if one Jesuit had been important in the preparation of the embassy, another Jesuit was instrumental in its failure. When they arrived in Beijing the Dutch had found themselves obliged to rely to some extent on Jesuit mandarins at the imperial court, and in particular Adam Schall von Bell, to confirm their account of who they were and what they wanted.¹⁵ Nieuhof was convinced that these Jesuits had misrepresented the Dutch to the emperor, and at the climax of his narrative of the embassy he lashed out, accusing them of acting as lobbyists for Portuguese mercantile interests: spreading bribes around the imperial court to garner support against the Dutch, representing the Dutch East India Company as an association of pirates rather than of legitimate businessmen, and putting the case for the Macao trade. The Dutch ambassadors, he said,

came to understand that Fr Adam and two other Jesuits living there had spent about three hundred taels of silver (to impede the progress of this labour), and had promised more; as also that they had falsely told the Tartars that the Dutch, under cover of trade, sought nothing but first to

¹³ Nieuhof J., *Het gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China* (Amsterdam, Jacob Meurs: 1665) part 1, 208, "Onder d'aanzienlijkste en deftigste Sineesche Schrijvers verdienen d'eerste plaats zekre Jesuiten, als Niklaas Trigautius, Alvaros Semedo, en Martinus Martini".

¹⁴ Ibid., introduction.

¹⁵ Ibid., part 1, 162–163.

get a foot on shore, and then to steal whatever they could carry. It also came to their ears that these three Jesuits had made great complaint that such trade would utterly impoverish Macao.¹⁶

This conflict of interests, or at the very least of intentions and interpretations, between representatives of the Dutch East India Company and members of the Society of Jesus brought two of the greatest institutional conduits for European knowledge of overseas societies into direct and very public confrontation.

This was so much evident that the English translation of the *Gezantschap* advertised itself on the title page (in the continuation of the title, omitted above) as including: *Also an epistle of Father John Adams their antagonist, concerning the whole negotiation. With an appendix of several remarks taken out of Father Athanasius Kircher. English'd, and set forth with their several sculptures.* In much the same manner as the newspaper editors of the time, the English translator of the *Gezantschap*, John Ogilby, was happy to provide his readers with different perspectives on a single event.

Pro-Jesuit Responses to Nieuhof

The Jesuit interpretation of the affair was, though, not so very different from Nieuhof's. There was no question of being tools of the commercial interests of the Portuguese, but the Jesuits were already convinced for reasons of their own that frustrating the Dutch desire to trade with China would be a good thing. The Jesuits on the China Mission were perhaps a little out of touch with the newly found amity in European affairs that had seen the Dutch come to terms with the Portuguese in 1640 and the Spaniards in 1648. In an understanding of recent history and political legitimacy perhaps more coloured by philosophical absolutes and by the experience of colonial rivalry in Asia, the Dutch were seen as rebels and interlopers who had no right to be there under their own flag, and who consequently were indeed only a step away from being pirates. A series of violent clashes in the 1620s, not only between the Dutch and the Portuguese (including a Dutch attempt on Macao on 1622), but also between the Dutch and the Chinese authorities on the Fujian coast, gave substance to the notion that the Dutch East India Company would happily take by force or fraud what they could

¹⁶ Ibid., part 1, 166.

not acquire by fair exchange.¹⁷ Ultimately, the Jesuit position seems to have been that they had not so much sabotaged the VOC's mission as simply informed the Emperor, to the best of their knowledge, who these strangers wanting access to China really were.

The immediate reaction of Catholics in the Low Countries was far less confrontational. Nieuhof's publication elicited two works that sought to appropriate, rather than confront, his images and descriptions, but to do so in a way that would compliment, rather than criticize, Jesuit activities in the Far East. The first of these is the Antwerp reprint, the 'piracy' of my title. For the most part this was an accurate reprint of the original, with fine copies of the original engravings. There were, however, a couple of significant changes. One was fairly obvious: Nieuhof's lengthy account of the Manchu conquest, cribbed from Martini's *De Bello Tartarico*, was replaced by a new set of 14 chapters (33–47) providing a potted history of the Jesuit missions in China, and a final chapter describing the so-called 'Nestorian stele', discovered around 1624, which showed that there had been a Christian presence in China as early as the seventh century, due to the activity of missionaries from the Assyrian Church of the East. These additional fifteen chapters were announced on the title page by an extension of the subtitle: 'Benevens een naukeurigh verhaal, van al 't geen de Jesuiten in China, tot voortplanting des Roomschen godsdiensts, sedert hun eerste intree in China, verrecht, en wat al yzelijke en wrede vervolgingen zy aldaar om 't geloof uit gestaan en geleden' (An accurate narration of all that the Jesuits have achieved in China for the propagation of the Romish religion, since their first entrance into China, and all the terrible and cruel persecutions they have there withstood and suffered for the faith). The use of 'Jesuits' (instead of 'Fathers of the Society of Jesus') and 'Romish religion' (rather than 'Catholic Faith'), both contrary to the usual forms of public presentation, seem designed to suggest that the laudatory account is the work of an outsider. On the inside pages, it becomes 'The Progress of the Christian Faith in China due to the Labours of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus'. These added chapters are as dependent on the earlier work of Trigault, Semedo and Martini as the material they replaced, simply

¹⁷ Wills J.E. jr., "Relations with Maritime Europeans, 1514–1662", in Twitchett D.–Mote F.W. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. VIII: *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, Part 2 (Cambridge: 1998) 351; 366–369.

choosing to include aspects of the literature that Nieuhof had chosen to omit.

Nieuhof's work was very close to plagiarism, although it would be anachronistic to consider it too much in that light, especially as he did acknowledge his use of Jesuit works, just not the extent of his dependence on them. The Antwerp Jesuit appropriation, or in some respects perhaps reappropriation, of Nieuhof's *Gezantschap* might be considered an act of piracy, although again it would be anachronistic to push this concept too hard in the 17th century. It is, however, the opposite of plagiarism: 'edifying' (that is to say, in effect, promotional) Jesuit writings about the China Mission were being tacked on to the best illustrated book on China available, fathering the whole on Nieuhof – a Protestant who had seen Jesuits in China with his own eyes and recorded how reliant the Dutch embassy had been on the aid of Jesuit go-betweens.

And that was the second significant change, a cut of just a couple of sentences, namely, those in which Nieuhof accused the Jesuits of having slandered the Dutch and of having bribed imperial officials to sabotage the VOC mission. The resulting impression was that the Jesuits had done little more than vouch for the identity of the Dutch as a European sea-going people from a homeland without a king. The only overt indication that the Jesuits might have had anything directly to do with this piratical adaptation of Nieuhof's work is in the identity of the publisher, Michiel Cnobbaert, whose staple was printing textbooks for use in Jesuit colleges, and who was virtually the in-house printer for the Society's Antwerp house. The production as a whole might be regarded as 'jesuitical' in the worst sense (that is, according to the *OED*, 'Having the character ascribed to the Jesuits; deceitful, dissembling; practicing equivocation, prevarication, or mental reservation of truth').

So that was one response to Nieuhof's work: to hijack it as a vehicle for promotional writing about the Jesuit mission. The 'play' option was perhaps not so very different. Joost van den Vondel, the prince of Dutch poets, was a prolific playwright. His best-known plays are *Lucifer*, a tragedy about the downfall of the Angel of Light that was banned after the first performance, and *Gijsbrecht van Aemstel*, the first play performed in Holland's first purpose-built playhouse: a historical piece, which in classicizing fashion makes a 13th-century Lord of Amstel into a Dutch Aeneas. One of Vondel's least known plays is *Zungchin or Downfall of the Chinese Government*, a closet drama published

in 1667.¹⁸ *Zungchin* was a treatment in the tragic mode of the betrayal and suicide of the last Ming emperor of China.¹⁹ The work is somewhat lacking in dramatic tension, and as far as I have been able to ascertain no attempt has ever been made to stage it. It is a play for the page, a piece of verse in different voices, rather than a text for dramatic performance.

The dialogues of *Zungchin* are stocked with local colour and historical detail that critics have taken to derive from Nieuhof. It is equally possible that they derive from Nieuhof's sources, for the section of the *Gezantschap* most relevant to the play is the account of the dynasty's downfall that Nieuhof had lifted from Martini, but the play's publication in 1667, two years after Nieuhof's book came out to international acclaim, is at least suggestive that this is a response to Nieuhof's work, and an appropriation of it to Vondel's own ends.²⁰ For the Dutch reading public, at least, this material was more readily identifiable as Nieuhof's work than as Martini's, for the simple reason that it was Nieuhof's adaptation of *De Bello Tartarico* in the final chapters of the *Gezantschap* that had made Martini's account available in Dutch. For Vondel, as for those producing the Antwerp reprint of the *Gezantschap*, Nieuhof's work functions as a hook on which to hang a paean of praise for the Jesuit missionaries whom Nieuhof had maligned, and none less than Adam Schall, like Vondel himself a native of Cologne.²¹ The Adam Schall of *Zungchin* is the only character in any

¹⁸ Available online from the Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren, at the url http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/vond001dewel0_01/vond001dewel0_01_0068.htm (last consulted 30 January 2009).

¹⁹ Van Kley E.J., "An Alternative Muse: The Manchu Conquest of China in the Literature of Seventeenth-Century Northern Europe", *European Studies Review* 6 (1976) 21–43.

²⁰ Smit W.A.P., *Van Pascha tot Noah: Een verkenning van Vondels dramas naar continuïteit en ontwikkeling in hun grondmotief en structuur*, vol. 3, Zwolse Reeks van Taal- en Letterkundige Studies 5C (Zwolle: 1962) 449–506, esp. 455–457. Available online from the Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren at the url http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/smit021vanp03_01/ (last consulted 30 January 2009).

²¹ Blue G., "Johann Adam Schall and the Jesuit Mission in Vondel's *Zungchin*", in Malek R., S.V.D. (ed.), *Western Learning and Christianity in China: The Contribution and Impact of Johann Adam Schall von Bell, S.J. (1592–1666)*, vol. II, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 35/2 (Nettetal: 1998) 951–981. There is also a mention of the play in Idema W.L., "Dutch Translations of Classical Chinese Literature: Against a Tradition of Retranslations", in Chan L.T. (ed.), *One into Many: Translation and the Dissemination of Classical Chinese Literature*, Approaches to Translation Studies 18 (Amsterdam – New York: 2003) 213–242, esp. 214.

of Vondel's plays who represents a person still living at the time Vondel portrayed him.

Vondel presents Asia as the continent most blessed by the Creator's bounty, and China as the 'diamond in the ring' of Asian lordships, but also draws on descriptions of Chinese religions and religious practices to show the one thing still lacking for China's perfection: illumination in the truth of the Gospel. In acts 3 and 4 he has the character of Adam Schall contradicting hopes and fears based on superstition, and exhorting to patient submission to the dictates of Providence, somewhat tinged with the Baroque fashion for Stoicism. The final character to speak is the Ghost of Francis Xavier, but the shades of Tacitus and Seneca hover mutely in the background.

Vondel has the chorus recount how powerful Chinese converts to Catholicism, both eunuchs and mandarins, overthrow the worship of idols to make room for the worship of the one true God. One of the most powerful and insistent tropes of Dutch anti-Catholicism was that Catholics were idolaters, in part for their veneration of images but primarily for their adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. It is therefore small wonder that Vondel, raised a Baptist but a convert to Catholicism in middle age, lays such emphasis on Catholicism's opposition to idolatry.

Other Catholic missionaries active in China were at the same time accusing Jesuits of being too accommodating towards idolatry for allowing Chinese converts to continue with rituals of obeisance or veneration that looked suspiciously like worship of ancestors, of Confucius and of the emperor.²² It was to answer such criticisms in Rome that Martino Martini had been sent back from China in 1651, incidentally reigniting Dutch interest in Canton. This being the case, Vondel's presentation of Adam Schall as opposing superstition, and Chinese converts as casting down idols, may also have been an indirect way to answer Catholic critics of Jesuit mission policy, without opening up the whole can of worms of an internal Catholic controversy by explicitly referencing it.

²² Mungello D.E. (ed.), *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning*, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 33 (Nettetal: 1994) provides an overview of the extensive scholarly literature on this Chinese Rites Controversy.

Conclusion

Both these pro-Jesuit responses to Nieuhof's criticism of the Jesuits at the imperial court in Beijing – Michiel Cnobbaert's piracy in Antwerp, and Joost van den Vondel's play in Amsterdam – avoid direct controversy, but both indirectly contest a VOC-sponsored version of a series of events that had taken place a decade and more previously. The manner in which this contestation occurs is a replication of the account itself, in Cnobbaert's case, or of some of its themes and contents, in Vondel's, bringing different aspects of Nieuhof's work to a broader audience even as particular interpretations or representations to be found in it were modified.

The lesson of this for one not so much interested in trading companies themselves as in the networks of public communication within early-modern Europe is that while the VOC might decide what information should and what should not be made public – holding back a history of Hindustan, putting forth a description of China – they could do nothing to control what was done with this information once it was in the public domain of European civil society. This was perhaps especially the case when they were going head-to-head with another of the few institutional sources of extra-European information and global communication.

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KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND CULTURAL
APPROPRIATION: GEORG EVERHARD RUMPHIUS'S
'D'AMBOINSCH E RARITEITKAMER' (1705)

Maria-Theresia Leuker

Introduction

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) set its mercantile sights on establishing a spice monopoly in the Moluccas. The VOC pushed out the Portuguese and, in 1605, created its first trading post on Ambon, thus laying the foundations for an ever-burgeoning trade in the years to follow.¹ The economic, military, and commercial system centred on Ambon was accompanied by the creation of a knowledge network. The key actor in this network was the VOC official and naturalist Georg Everhard Rumphius (1627–1702), who in the second half of the seventeenth century wrote several large volumes on the natural history of the Moluccas, which were only published after his death.

In the following essay I shall analyse one of these works – *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* (*The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet*; 1705) [Fig. 1], a description of crustaceans, molluscs and minerals on Ambon and the surrounding islands – in its function as a medium of knowledge transfer. I shall examine the way Rumphius's descriptions of nature embody symbolic processes of translation and appropriation, occurring not only between cultures but also between materiality and mediality. In doing so, I will draw on the actor-network theory of the French anthropologist of science Bruno Latour. In investigating the mechanisms of knowledge transfer and accumulation in the process of European expansion, Latour showed how interacting political, economic and scientific

¹ On this and the historic context in general see Stapel F.W., *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië*, vol. III (Amsterdam: 1939); Vlekke B.H.M., *Nusantara: A History of the East Indies Archipelago* (Cambridge, MA.: 1945) 107–199; and Andaya L.Y., *The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period* (Honolulu: 1993) 138–213. Important is also Knaap G.J., *Kruidnagelen en Christenen; De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de bevolking van Ambon 1656–1696* (Dordrecht etc.: 1987).



Fig. 1. Title page of Georg Everhard Rumphius, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* (Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705). Göttingen, Göttingen University Library.

networks created the conditions under which information collected during expeditions abroad made Europe into a centre of knowledge, science and power.² Latour regards 'the mobility, stability and combinability of collected items' as an indispensable requirement for generating scientific knowledge from facts and objects.³

Rumphius was one of many VOC servants of German descent. He was born in the Hessian town of Wölfersheim and raised in the Reformed Faith. In nearby Hanau, where religious refugees from the Netherlands and Wallonia had settled at the end of the sixteenth century, he attended grammar school and received a Gymnasium education in the traditional liberal arts, including the study of Latin, Greek and Hebrew.⁴ Rumphius arrived in the East Indies in 1653 as a soldier in the service of the VOC. Soon after his arrival, he was stationed on Ambon, which is where he would stay until his death in 1702. Rumphius's first task on Ambon was the supervision of building projects.⁵ In 1657, he requested transfer to the VOC's civil service. He initially worked as a junior merchant (*onderkoopman*) in Larike on the western coast of Ambon. There he developed an interest in the flora and fauna of the tropics. In 1660, having obtained the rank of merchant, he was transferred to Hila on the northwest coast of Ambon. We have two early indications of his intellectual ambitions. One is the Latinization of his surname near the end of the 1650s. The other is a letter from 1663 in which Rumphius asks the VOC for permission to buy books and instruments in Amsterdam and have them transported on company ships for a study of natural history. Permission was granted, and in 1669 Rumphius was allowed to cut back on his duties as merchant to dedicate himself completely to his studies of natural science. His plan to move to Batavia and work there as a merchant was nevertheless thwarted the following year when Rumphius lost his sight in both his eyes. Jacob Cops, the Governor of Ambon from 1669–1672, ordered him to leave his position and to move to Victoria

² Latour B., *Science in Action. How to follow scientists and engineers through society* (Cambridge, MA.: 1987) 215–257.

³ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁴ Beckman E.M., "Introduction: Rumphius's Life and Work", in Rumphius G.E., *The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet*, translated, edited, annotated and with an introduction by E.M. Beckman (New Haven-London: 1999) XXXV–XLIII, Buijze W., *Leven en werk van Georg Everhard Rumphius (1627–1702). Een natuurhistoricus in dienst van de VOC* (The Hague: 2006) 1–6.

⁵ On Rumphius's life in the Indies, see Beckman, "Introduction" XLIX–LXXVI.

Castle in Ambon's capital. From Batavia, Governor-General Johan Maetsuycker instructed Cops to continue payment of Rumphius's wages on account of his achievements, and to treat him in accordance with his rank. The VOC also provided Rumphius with clerks and draughtsmen, which allowed him to dedicate himself to his studies – albeit 'with borrowed pen and eyes', as he writes in the preface of his *Herbarium Amboinense*. In the 1680s it appears that his son, Paulus Augustus, worked for him as a secretary and draughtsman, creating a portrait of his father for *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* [Fig. 2].

All of Rumphius's works were written or completed after 1670, and except for a few short texts they were published only decades (and, in some cases, even centuries) after his death. Rumphius's main work is the six-volume *Herbarium Amboinense*, published between 1741 and 1750.⁶ Its meticulously written and illustrated descriptions of nearly 1,200 plants represent the first general overview of Ambon's flora and have remained a standard reference work to this day. The work I shall focus on in this essay, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer*,⁷ was Rumphius's second major study on natural history and one of the first European scientific works on molluscs. The first edition, published in Amsterdam in 1705, consists of 340 folio pages of text and 60 full-page illustrations. The work is organized into three books: the first book (44 chapters) describes the crustaceans of Ambon and the surrounding islands; the second (39 chapters) presents the molluscs; the third (83 chapters) is dedicated to the island's minerals.⁸ Besides his descriptions, Rumphius also discusses, among other things, their medical, ritual and magical significance for the indigenous people – making his work a source of ethnographic as well as indigenous scientific knowledge. Similar

⁶ Rumphius G.E., *Het Amboinsche Kruid-boek: Dat is, Beschryving van de meest bekende Boomen, Heesters, Kruiden, Land- en Water-Planten, die men in Amboina, en de omliggende eylanden vind, Na haare gedaante, verscheide benamingen, aanqueking, en gebruik [...]*, 6 vols. (Amsterdam, François Changuion, Jan Catuffe, Hermanus Uytwerf: 1741–1750) <http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen-de/purl?PPN369545850>.

⁷ Rumphius G.E., *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer, Behelzende eene Beschryvinge van allerhande zoo weeke als harde Schaalvischen, te weeten raare Krabben, Kreeften, en diergelyke Zeedieren, als mede allerhande Hoorntjes en Schulpen, die men in d'Amboinsche Zee vindt: Daar beneven zommige Mineraalen, Gesteenten, en soorten van Aarde, die in d'Amboinsche, en zommige omliggende Eilanden gevonden worden* (Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705) <http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?PPN372428037>.

⁸ See the detailed overview of the content in, Beekman, "Introduction" XCVI–CIV.

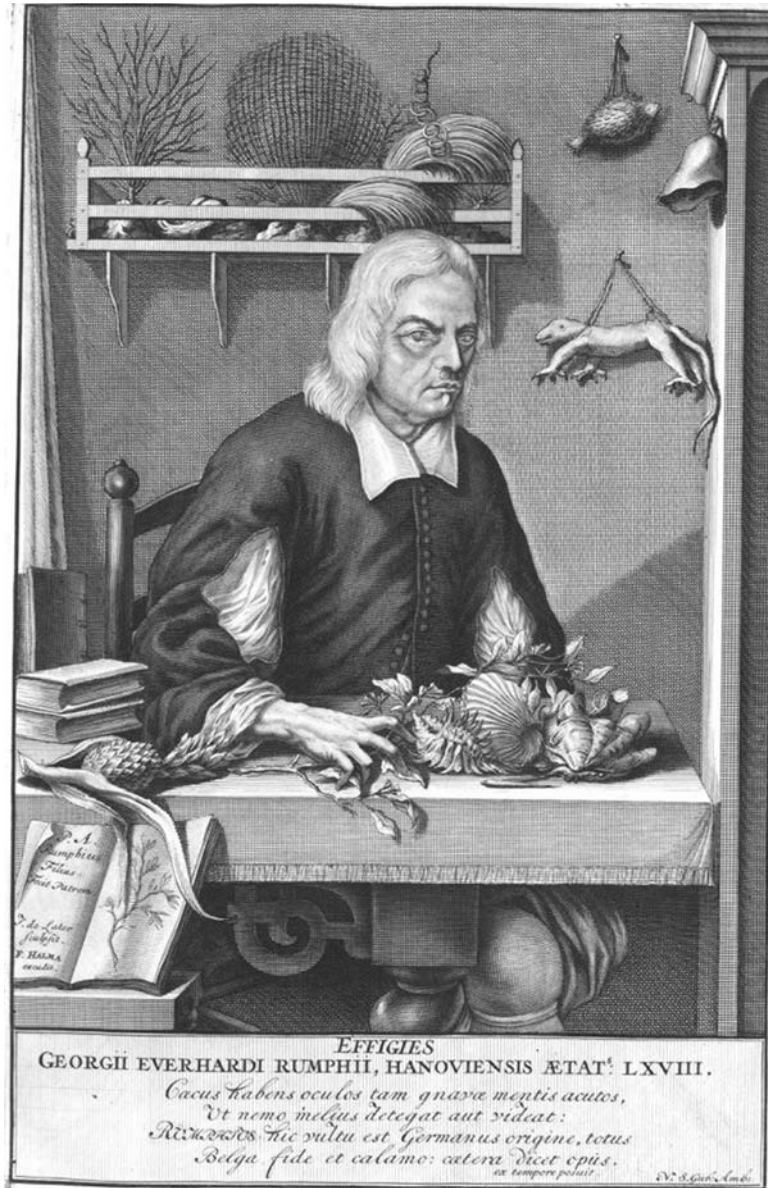


Fig. 2. Jacob de Later after Paulus Augustus Rumphius, *Effigies Georgii Everhardi Rumphii, Hanoviensis aetatis LXVIII*. Engraving, from Georg Everhard Rumphius, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* (Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705). Göttingen, Göttingen University Library.

cultural observations can be found in Rumphius's *Herbarium Amboinense* and in his geographic and historic descriptions of Ambon.⁹

Strategies and Techniques of Knowledge Accumulation

D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer represents an instance of knowledge accumulation and transfer emerging in close connection with processes of economic and political appropriation within colonial power structures. In his capacity as a merchant, Rumphius dealt directly with the VOC's lucrative cultivation and trade of spices in the Moluccas. During his ten years as a VOC official at Hila, Rumphius found ideal conditions for collecting and research. According to the testimony of his friend, the church minister and chorographer François Valentyn, his accommodations in Ambon were most comfortable – a big house, servants, several mounts, a spacious garden with gardener and a large armed vessel manned by forty rowers plus a gunner.¹⁰ Without the organizational and financial support of the Company, and without the clerks and draughtsmen it provided and paid for after he went blind, Rumphius would not have been able to write his books. It is a case of what Stephen Greenblatt called 'the crucial connection between mimesis and capitalism' in the early modern period.¹¹

With the 'technology of power' which helped Europeans conquer the New World came more than ships, navigational instruments and effective weaponry; it also included 'the possession of a technology of preservation and reproduction', which is to say, writing and drawing.¹² Once observations and objects could be committed to paper, they could be transported and archived, and thus accumulated and compared

⁹ Rumphius G.E., *De Ambonse historie: Behelsende Een kort Verhaal Der Gedenkwaardigste Geschiedenissen zo in Vreede als oorlog voorgevallen sedert dat de Nederlandsche Oost Indische Comp: Het Besit in Amboina Gehadt Heeft, Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 64 (The Hague: 1910); Rumphius G.E., *De Generale Lant-beschrijvinge van het Ambonse Gouvernement behelsende en wat daaronder begrepen zij, mitsgaders een Summarisch verhaal van de Ternataanse en Portugeese regeering en hoe de Nederlanders eerstmaal daerin gecomen zijn ofwel De Ambonsche Lant-beschrijvinge*, ed. W. Buijze (The Hague: 2001).

¹⁰ Beckman, "Introduction" LXV.

¹¹ 'In the modern world-order it is with capitalism that the proliferation and circulation of representations (and devices for the generation and transmission of representations) achieved a spectacular and virtually inescapable global magnitude [...] – the will and the ability to cross immense distances and, in the search for profit, to encounter and to represent radically unfamiliar human and natural objects [...].' Greenblatt S., *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: 1991) 6.

¹² Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* 9.

with other observations and objects.¹³ The collection, organization and analysis of Ambon's nature and the recording of the orally-transmitted knowledge of its indigenous peoples mirrored the VOC's appropriation of economic goods. Rumphius's superiors were very well aware of the fact that his work contained strategic knowledge. The executive body of the VOC, the *Heren Zeventien* (Gentlemen Seventeen), pursued what Beekman called a 'paranoid monopolistic policy', keeping almost all Rumphius's writings strictly confidential and thus delaying their publication.¹⁴ Permission for the printing of the *Herbarium Amboinense* was granted by the VOC only on the condition that the Company's Amsterdam Chamber could examine the book beforehand to expunge passages whose publication might adversely affect its highly profitable spice trade.

In Ambon, at the site of knowledge production, Rumphius followed techniques which he had brought with him from Europe. In the dedication to *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* Rumphius emphasizes that his book was most of all about

[...] such Rarities as are found in the Ambonese sea, or on the beaches of the neighbouring Islands, and which I, during my lengthy stay on Amboina, carefully collected and preserved, with much effort and expense.¹⁵

Collecting natural objects for study and systematically organizing nature are two basic strategies for accumulating knowledge in the European cultural and scientific tradition. Collection and organization according to European systems of classification were a precondition for written and pictorial representation. Collections, texts and illustrations were mobile, stable and combinable, and thus could be incorporated into the cycle of knowledge accumulation. Rumphius wrote his texts only a few decades before Linnaeus developed his system of binomial classification.

Rumphius's discoveries became a part of the knowledge accumulated in what Latour calls Europe's 'centres of calculation' – on whose basis Linnaeus, for instance, formulated his *Systema naturae*. Many of the objects of *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* bear names given to them by Rumphius; others, however, are named and organized according to the conventions of the scientific literature of the time. In this sense,

¹³ Latour, *Science in Action* 226.

¹⁴ Beekman, "Introduction" LXXIII.

¹⁵ Rumphius G.E., *The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet*, translated, edited, annotated and with an introduction by E.M. Beekman (New Haven-London: 1999) 3.

Rumphius follows the occidental tradition of the natural history genre, particularly Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia* as well as Aristotle's natural history writings.¹⁶ With each object he provides names in different languages – usually Dutch, Latin, Malay and Ambonese and often Javanese, Hindustani, Portuguese, or Chinese as well.¹⁷ At first glance it seems as if the names he transmits dominate those he provided himself. In most cases, one can assume that the Latin and Dutch names stem from Rumphius,¹⁸ while those in Malay, Ambonese and the other languages do not. The Latin names assign the natural objects to the European scientific tradition, whereas the Malay or Ambonese preserve links with indigenous knowledge networks. The numerous synonyms from different sources and languages Rumphius attaches to each object allow for a relating of data from diverse languages and sources to one and the same object and so increase scientific understanding. By employing autochthonous nomenclature, he ensures that his readers living on Ambon or travelling to the island will be able to seek out the objects he describes with help from native informants. That the Latin and Dutch names often prove to be translations of the Malay or Ambonese names is another example of cultural appropriation within knowledge transfer.¹⁹ Moreover, in the employment of nomenclature, Rumphius includes a comparison of book knowledge with empirical data – a technique of knowledge production which Latour localizes in European 'centres of calculation' such as cabinets of natural history.²⁰ In Rumphius's case the first stage of knowledge production is already completed in the colonial periphery.

¹⁶ For detailed information on the primary sources of *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* see Beckman, "Introduction" XC VII–C II. On the history of taxonomy see Mayr E., *The growth of biological thought. Diversity, evolution, and inheritance* (Cambridge, MA. etc.: 1982) chapter 4.

¹⁷ Beckman E.M., "Rumphius: Seeing Tropical Nature Whole" in idem, *Troubled Pleasures: Dutch Colonial Literature from the East Indies 1600–1950* (Oxford: 1996) 89.

¹⁸ That Rumphius often did not adopt already existing European terminology becomes obvious from the fact that Simon Schijnvoet, the Amsterdam editor of *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer*, often gives diverging names in his end-of-chapter remarks.

¹⁹ For detailed information on Rumphius's nomenclature see Martens E. van "Die Mollusken (Conchylien) und die übrigen wirbellosen Thiere in Rumpf's Rariteitkamer", in: Greshoff M. (ed.): *Rumphius Gedenkboek 1702–1902* (Haarlem: 1902) 109–136, and Benthem Jutting W.S.S. van, "Rumphius and Malacology" in: Wit H.C.D. de (ed.): *Rumphius Memorial Volume* (Baarn: 1959) 191–196.

²⁰ More in accordance with Latour's ideas, the collector of rarities Simon Schijnvoet, Rumphius's editor in Amsterdam, supplemented the author's descriptions using his own knowledge and sources.

Observation as a European Mode of Knowledge Production

Autopsy, or 'seeing with one's own eyes', is the necessary prerequisite for describing objects that constitutes a basic European mode of knowledge production and cultural appropriation. Again and again, Rumphius notes that the appearance, origin and properties of his objects are based on his own observations, and appeals to his own empirical knowledge to contradict the canonical authors. In this way, he participates in the seventeenth-century paradigm shift in scientific knowledge production. If in earlier times reference to the authority of canonical authors and writings had been adequate to back up a claim, now claims had to be verified by empirical observation and experimental evaluation. Francis Bacon championed this change in his 'Great Instauration' project, a renewal of philosophy and the sciences on the basis of empirical experience whose outlines he published in 1620 as *Instauratio magna*.²¹ Although Rumphius often refers to Pliny's *Natural History*, he also, following Bacon's plea for an observational natural history, does not hesitate to correct his great role model. In the chapter on *Nautilus tenuis* [Fig. 3], an octopus species today known as *Greater Argonaut* (*Argonauta argo*) [Linnaeus, 1758], or *Paper Nautilus* due to the paper-thin egg case created by the female in which it resembles a *Nautilus* living in its shell,²² Rumphius writes: 'Pliny describes it as a singular marvel of the sea, but, as was his wont, rather obscurely and with two names, which, so it seems, he considered to be two different things or fishes'.²³ To the Dutch translation of both passages he adds, 'Both these descriptions fit our fine *Nautilus*, which *Jonston*, after *Belonius*, describes somewhat clearer'.²⁴ Rumphius bases his criticism on the fact that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century descriptions match his own observations. What Pliny had considered to be two species, Rumphius notes, turned out to be one.

²¹ Daston L. – Park K., *Wonders and the order of nature 1150–1750* (New York: 1998) 220–231.

²² Virden T., "Argonauta argo" (On-line), Animal Diversity Web (1999), accessed August 05, 2008 at http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Argonauta_argo.html.

²³ Rumphius, *Curiosity Cabinet* 94.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 95. Here, Rumphius refers to Jan Jonston, *Historia naturalis* (Amsterdam, Jan Jacobsz. Schipper: 1657) and Pierre Belon, *Les observations de plusieurs singularités et choses mémorables trouvées en Grèce, Asie, etc.* (Paris, Gilles Corrozet: 1553); see Rumphius, *Curiosity Cabinet* 401, 423.

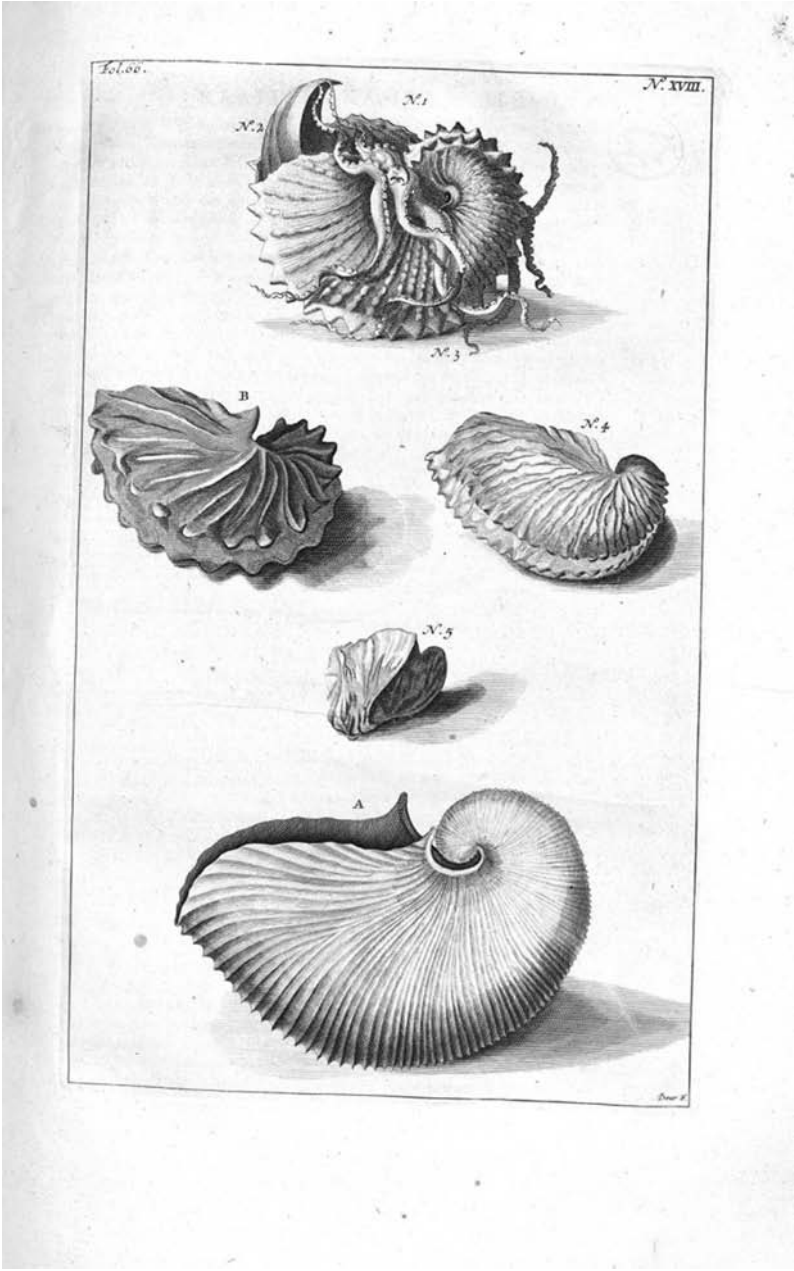


Fig. 3. Anonymous, *Nautilus tenuis*. Engraving from Georg Everhard Rumphius, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* (Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705), plate XVIII. Göttingen University Library.

This example, indeed Rumphius's entire book, testifies to a new, positive assessment of *curiositas*, or curiosity, which the Christian tradition had long considered a vice. Until the end of the Middle Ages, the human thirst for knowledge was subject to religious restrictions. God's nature and its wonders were to be looked at with admiration, but man was not permitted to uncover all its secrets. Those who did, and credited themselves rather than God for their new insights, became guilty of the grave sin of pride. In the course of the early modern era, theology-based ways of thinking and living began to lose sway. By the turn of the seventeenth century, natural philosophy had rehabilitated curiosity as a virtue. Wonder and curiosity combined to form an attitude of inquiry and research. This is how the term 'curiosity', in the sense of something belonging to a 'curiosity cabinet' or collection of rare and precious objects, became associated with the new positive meaning of *curiositas*. 'Curiosity' came to refer, metonymically, to the object of *curiositas*. The topic of natural history was no longer, as it had been during the Middle Ages, the normal and obvious; it was now the marvellous, the enigmatic, the rare and the special.²⁵

Rumphius centres his research on objects having exactly these qualities. He is aware of the fact that his *curiositas* made him, a European, different from the indigenous people of the Moluccas. Writing about a particular kind of Ambonese crystal he notes, 'It is still not known how these grow, because one will find them mostly in the high cold mountains, where few people go, and since the Native is not curious about it.'²⁶ Written and graphic representations in books disseminated in Europe transform curious observation into visual evidence that enables even those who have not seen the represented objects for themselves to participate in a cultural appropriation of the foreign:

Everything in the European dream of possession rests on witnessing, a witnessing understood as a form of significant and representative seeing. To see is to secure the truth of what might otherwise be deemed incredible [...]. The person who witnesses becomes the point of contact, the mediator between 'ourselves' and what is out there beyond our sight.²⁷

²⁵ Daston L., "Die Lust an der Neugier in der frühneuzeitlichen Wissenschaft", in Krüger K. (ed.), *Curiositas: Welterfahrung und ästhetische Neugierde in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Göttingen: 2002) 147–177; Daston L., "Curiosity in Early Modern Science", *Word and Image* 11 (1995) 391–404.

²⁶ Rumphius, *Curiosity Cabinet* 268.

²⁷ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* 122.

Here Greenblatt addresses the importance of witnessing as a means to authenticate content. Rumphius's frequent references to his own observation of that which he describes must also be read as a strategy of certification. Until the early modern times, it was typical for printed reports of far-away journeys to present their readers with numerous falsehoods and exaggerations. At the end of the seventeenth century, the time Rumphius was recording his observations, it had become easier to distinguish fact from fiction because of the greater number of people who travelled between Europe and the newly discovered areas and who could thus corroborate information. Still, a natural history text, relying as it did on fiction-prone narration, needed the authority of a serious scientist who could credibly bear witness to the authenticity of the content.²⁸

The Anecdote and the Encounter with Difference

D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer transfers knowledge in two main respects. On the one hand, the appearance and properties of the objects are described, and their occurrence and habitat or place of discovery noted. Also included are nomenclature and references to descriptions of the objects in other works of natural science. On the other hand, Rumphius often reports the cultural function of an object and enriches his otherwise objective and exact descriptions with anecdotes. Both these forms of knowledge transfer occur within the conventions of the natural history genre, which since its beginnings has incorporated both factual description and narration. Pliny the Elder differentiates the content of his *Naturalis historia* into facts (*res*), accounts (*historiae*) and observations (*observationes*).²⁹ For Greenblatt, the anecdote is a typical part of the accounts of travellers and discoverers:

For the anecdote [...] is the principal register of the unexpected and hence of the encounter with difference [...]. [...] anecdotes are registers of the singularity of the contingent – associated [...] with the rim rather than the immobile and immobilizing center.³⁰

²⁸ Siegfried Huigen confirms the necessity of this strategy of authentication for explorers in eighteenth-century South Africa. See Huigen S., *Verkenningen van Zuid-Afrika. Achttiende-eeuwse reizigers aan de Kaap* (Zutphen: 2007) 201.

²⁹ Vögel H., "Naturgeschichte", in Fricke H. – Braungart G. (eds.), *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft* vol. II (Berlin: 2000) 688.

³⁰ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* 2–3.

This is particularly true for Rumphius's *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer*, for it is nothing if not about the rare, the strange and the marvellous. The anecdote itself works as a kind of curiosity so to speak, the literary equivalent of the object to which it is connected. In many cases, reports and anecdotes increase the particularity of an object; sometimes they even constitute the particularity itself. On *Nautilus tenuis* [Fig. 3] Rumphius writes:

I should mention a rare event here. A Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus*), being a bird that constantly hunts at sea, took such a *Nautilus*, while it was floating in the Sea, and bore it aloft, but while his business was with the fish, and since he did not care about it as a curiosity, he struck his claws mostly into the fish, wherefore the shell came to fall out of his claws and, by rare fortune, it fell on a small spot of sand between rocks in such a way that nothing was broken off, except for a small corner of the foremost edge; and a fisherman who was wandering thereabouts quickly picked it up and brought it to me.³¹

With palpable pride, Rumphius then adds that he presented the unique shell – which literally fell from the sky – to the *Academia Naturae Curiosorum* in Germany. This was no doubt an attempt to establish contacts with Europe and move from his peripheral position to a recognized scientific network.³² And his efforts paid off: In 1681, the Academy made Rumphius a member, bestowing on him the honorary name *Plinius*.³³

In the article on *Nautilus tenuis*, Rumphius goes on to explain the particular cultural significance of the creature for the indigenous population:

This whelk is found so rarely that it is priced very highly, even in the Indies. The Natives consider it a sign of good fortune if they find it, and keep it among their treasures, and they seldom display it except on holidays and times of public mirth, when the women bring it forth, when they perform the round dance, *Lego Lego*; when the lead dancer carries this shell raised up high in her right hand; but they are not finical with them, even if they are somewhat smoked, torn, and full of holes; which is why one should get them forthwith out of their hands by means of

³¹ Rumphius, *Curiosity Cabinet* 94.

³² On Rumphius's contacts with scientists and collectors in Europe see Beekman, "Introduction" CVII.

³³ On Rumphius's membership in the *Academia Naturae Curiosorum* see Beekman, "Introduction" LXXIII–LXXIV as well as Schulze F., "Georgius Everhardus Rumphius (1628–1702) und das wissenschaftliche Netzwerk seiner Zeit", *Rudolstädter Naturhistorische Schriften* 12 (2004) 3–15.

money or handsome speech, if one wants them to be undamaged; for the ordinary kind that can hold 4 or 5 quarters in its boat, one will pay 1 Rixdollar without bargaining [...].³⁴

The knowledge of the ritual function of *Nautilus tenuis* provides it with an exotic touch as a collector's item. This also marks the cultural difference between indigenous and European collectors: for the former, the object possessed mostly symbolic value, its state is irrelevant; for the latter, it possessed exchange value measured by size (according to the amount of liquid it may contain) and condition. This difference concretely illustrates the process of cultural appropriation: in return for payment the native cult object can become a rarity in a European collection. Rumphius's descriptions contain an implied sense of his own cultural superiority, and it more or less explicitly characterizes his general attitude toward the indigenous population in his *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer*.

In the chapter on *Crystallus Ambonica* (Ambonese quartz crystal) [Fig. 4, No. 3 – No. 10] Rumphius describes the places in the Indonesian archipelago where crystals are found. A mountain in the region of Bima (the eastern part of the Island of Sumbawa, the western part of the Island of Flores, as well as the islands in between) serves as a place of refuge for the local king:

[...] to perform *Batappa*, and where a *Djing* or Devil appears to him in the water with large buffalo horns on his forehead, and who points out these stones to him on rocks in hallow water. *Batappa* is a Godless relique of their Heathendom, which the Moors perform against their law, and, therefore, in secret; when they desire something from a *Djing*, that is, *Daemon* (which they distinguish from Satan or the Devil), or when they want to learn a trick, or want riches, or how to be lucky and invulnerable in warfare, how to rob, steal, or commit thievery, gamble, or love, etc., they go to such distant places on high mountains, stay for a while, day and night, and bring some offerings to the *Djing*, firmly resolved not to be scared by its appearance nor to let themselves be chased off, and so the *Djing* finally gives them a small piece of wood or a little stone, which they are supposed to wear in order to get the things they prayed for, and so they even think that they are Religious in their fashion, and this is why they call these crystals *Batu Djing*.³⁵

³⁴ Rumphius, *Curiosity Cabinet* 94.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

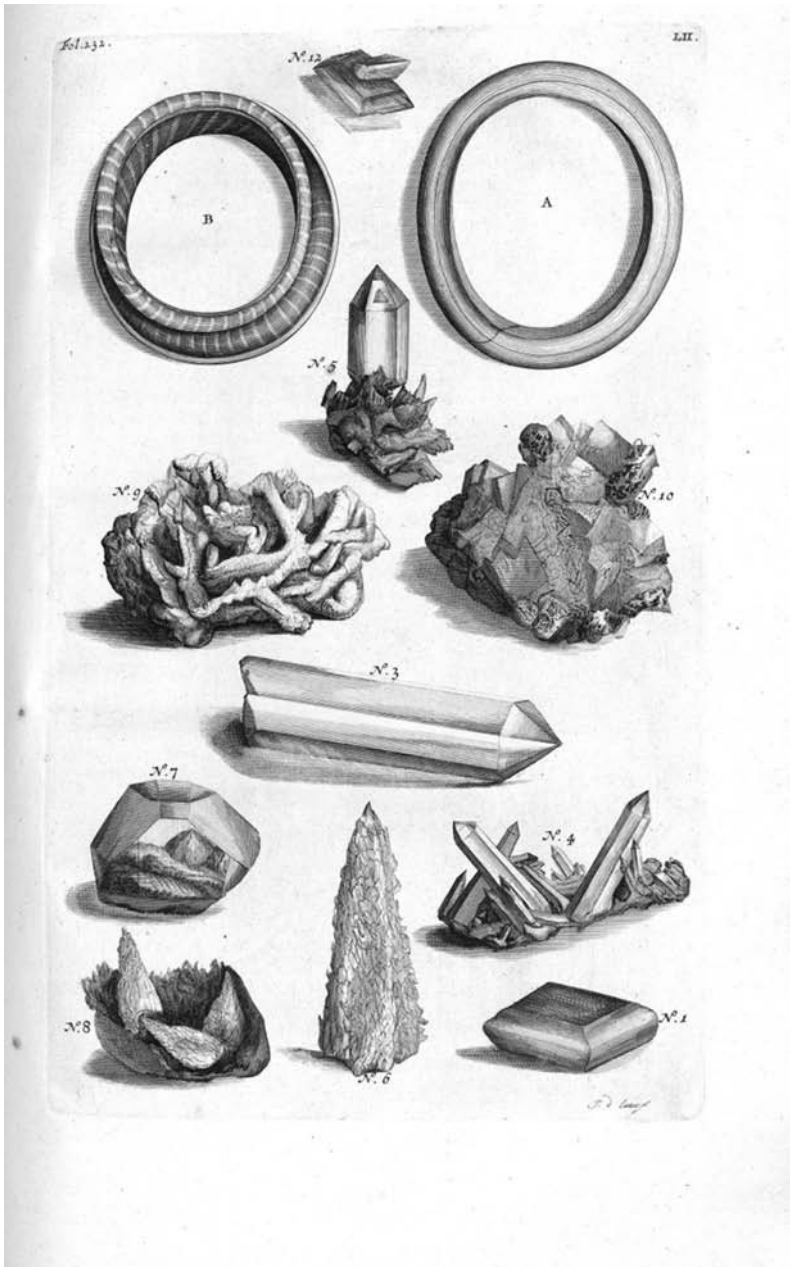


Fig. 4. Anonymous, *Cristallus Ambonica, Mamacur*. Engraving from Georg Everhard Rumphius, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* (Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705), plate LII. Göttingen, Göttingen University Library.

The fact that Rumphius regards the native practice of solitary retreat for obtaining magical objects and powers as a pagan superstition makes it clear that he shares ‘the Christians’ conviction that they possessed an absolute and exclusive religious truth’.³⁶ Nevertheless, he thinks that the religious belief of the native people in magic and ghosts is worth describing, all the more so because it increases fascination for the crystal as a collector’s item by providing it with an aura of mystery.

Immediately before this side note on *Batappa* Rumphius tells an anecdote about a soldier from Europe who had been talked into overseas military service by a recruiting sergeant in Amsterdam. The sergeant – Rumphius calls him a ‘Soul Merchant’ – promised him diamonds and pearls, which he said were growing everywhere in the East Indies on the rocks. Having discovered otherwise, the disappointed soldier collected the comparatively worthless crystals ‘which he, upon his return to Holland, was going to shove in the Soul Merchant’s face, as a token of gratitude for having been deceived like that.’³⁷ This anecdote – which Rumphius tells, not without a hint of sarcasm, ‘to uphold the veracity of those honest Merchants of Souls’³⁸ – puts the condescension in his description of the *Batappa* as a ‘Godless relique of their Heathendom into perspective’. In the search for riches, indigenous superstition is matched by European naivety: the local king commits himself to deceptive belief in the *Djing*, while the would-be recruit lets himself be deceived by the mendacious sergeant.

The juxtaposition of these anecdotes can be read against the background of a construct of European science characterized by Bruno Latour as the ‘great divide’. While accumulating knowledge from every corner of the world, educated Europeans became increasingly convinced that a great divide existed between themselves and the indigenous peoples they encountered: Europeans were committed to rationality and knowledge, and the natives frequently adhered to false, irrational beliefs.³⁹ At least for a spell, Rumphius’s two anecdotes seem to erase this distinction between ‘them’ (‘those who believe in things’) and ‘us’ (‘those who know things’). The illiterate soldier is perceived in the same way as the ‘ignorant’ natives. The ‘great divide’ turns out to be above all a social and less a geographical distinction. It separates

³⁶ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* 9.

³⁷ Rumphius, *Curiosity Cabinet* 267.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 267.

³⁹ Latour, *Science in Action* 210–213.

'us', the learned men, i.e. Rumphius and his readers, from 'them', the illiterate people, be they of European or exotic origin.

The chapter on the *Mamacur*, a special kind of glass bangle [Fig. 4, A, B], shows a similar rhetorical structure to that of the Ambonese quartz crystal anecdote. Rumphius also gives a succinct explanation of how an object becomes a 'curiosity' to be included in his book:

I will now relate how an insignificant thing can be counted among the most precious treasures, simply because people considered it such and because they imagined it was of great value. A thick, lumpish Armlet, which our Nation considers to be of glass, and which is indeed a mere product of human hands, made of glass, [...] it is generally called *Mamacur*. [...] The Natives argue quite seriously, that these are not stones made by man but that they are natural, that they come from either the sea or the mountains, and our nation's greed is such, that we let them keep on thinking that, since it is one of the most famous pieces of merchandise for these Natives, so that one can get a slave for just a plain one, but one can get 5, 10, or more slaves for one that they consider beautifully watered or clouded; in fact, they will even go to war with one another over one of these: Now where these Armlets come from, is not really known, most likely, the Portuguese brought the same to these Islands and persuaded the people, that these were precious Stones.⁴⁰

Here we are met with one of the oldest and best-known clichés of the European treatment of colonial populations: the natives are given some worthless glass and led to believe that it is something precious; in return, the Europeans receive everything they desire. In this case, the superiority of the Europeans proves to be relative, however, for their knowledge is restricted. The Dutch know neither the origins of the bangles nor how they are made. And while the Dutch had been unable to distinguish the real bangles from copies they had made in the Netherlands, the natives immediately recognized the forgery and insisted on having their originals back.⁴¹ Who is unable to distinguish worthless object from valuable object, natural object from artefact? The native people? Or the Europeans who likely spared neither cost nor effort to obtain those glass bangles for inclusion in their cabinets of natural objects? Rumphius is a witness and agent of the communication between the Portuguese, the indigenous population of the Moluccas and the Dutch – where intercultural and narrative transfer transformed worthless glass into a rarity.

⁴⁰ Rumphius, *Curiosity Cabinet* 276.

⁴¹ Ibid., 277.

The Curiosity Cabinet as 'Other Space'

In one sense, Rumphius's *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* refers to a concrete, topographically describable space: the Island of Ambon in particular and the Moluccas or the East Indies in general. In another sense, the book constitutes a new, imaginary, reproducible and transportable medial space, a space both of cultural difference and cultural appropriation in which real objects are replaced by their figurative and textual representations. In this medialized manner, objects are taken from their original natural and cultural contexts and given new meaning. The book does not mimetically depict the natural environment and the culture of the geographic space to which it refers; it selects and organizes. *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* is an exemplary representation, an 'espace autre' ('other space') in Foucault's sense, a space which refers to the entire geographic and cultural area that once surrounded it.⁴² When Foucault speaks of an 'other space', he means a place outside all spaces, a place where multiple, incompatible spaces come together. Just as a garden's elaborately arranged variety of plants can symbolize the totality of the world, a book such as Rumphius's *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* can be seen to represent an entire foreign habitat and culture outside space and time. This 'other space' is perfectly suited as a repository for 'immutable and combinable mobiles',⁴³ a repository that can be sent back to Europe to contribute to the accumulation and circulation of knowledge. The drawings it contains represent natural objects in a systematic order based on resemblance, while the accompanying texts form an indispensable supplement, both elaborating two-dimensional and (in most editions, black-and-white) figures, and reconstructing the original context of each object that might otherwise be lost in the systematic order. Once printed, the depicted objects appear in yet another new context, changing their function and meaning again. While in the production of the book those objects mostly serve as examples of genera and species organized by similarity and difference, in the reception of the book they mostly serve as drawn and written equivalents of collected objects.

⁴² Foucault M., "Des espaces autres" (1967), in Defert D. – Ewald F. (eds.), *Dits et écrits*, vol. IV (Paris: 1994) 752–762.

⁴³ Latour, *Science in Action* 227.

Cultural Appropriation through Collecting

A compilation of natural objects in book form, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitskamer* encompasses precisely those objects collected for curiosity cabinets by wealthy middle class collectors in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Holland. The nucleus of almost every collection – consisting otherwise, say, of stones, plants, animals and various *artificialia* – was a shell cabinet,⁴⁴ which Rumphius's work borrows to give its content metaphorical expression. This is apparent of course in the title as well as in the frontispiece [Fig. 5], which depicts a curiosity cabinet of which the book is a virtual equivalent. Collectors, standing and sitting around a table, are examining shells from a jug and a basket brought by two figures recognizable as indigenous people by their sparse clothing. Cupboards are depicted in the background whose open doors show a number of drawers in which collector's items are kept. This suggests that Rumphius's book is addressed first and foremost to collectors. Yet his exact and documented descriptions reveal a scientific ambition that goes well beyond the interest of collectors, who generally preferred to behold rather than analyse their objects. In his foreword Rumphius explains:

The present Work [...] has acquired the title of *The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet*, because in it are described those things, be they from living or lifeless Creatures, which, because of their rare shape, or because they are seldom encountered, are wont to be kept as *curiosities* by their Admirers [...].⁴⁵

Moreover, two Dutch collectors were directly involved with the publication of the book. Rumphius sent the manuscript to Hendrik D'Acquet, a collector, physician, and mayor of Delft, who he appeared to believe, could help him find a publisher. (In his dedication letter, he mentions sending D'Acquet shells quite frequently.)⁴⁶ And during the preparations for printing, the publisher, François Halma, was assisted

⁴⁴ Veen J. van der, "Dit klein Vertrek bevat een Weereld vol gewoel. Negentig Amsterdammers en hun kabinetten", in Bergvelt E. – Kistemaker R. (eds.), *De wereld binnen handbereik: Nederlandse kunst- en rariteitenverzamelingen, 1585–1735* (Zwolle: 1992) 233.

⁴⁵ Rumphius, *Curiosity Cabinet* 13.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3–4; see also Coomans H.E., "Schelpenverzamelingen", in Bergvelt E. – Kistemaker R. (eds.), *De wereld binnen handbereik: Nederlandse kunst- en rariteitenverzamelingen, 1585–1735* (Zwolle: 1992) 194–195.



Fig. 5. Jacob de Later, Frontispiece. Engraving from Georg Everhard Rumphius, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* (Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705). Göttingen, Göttingen University Library.

by the collector Simon Schijnvoet, a high-ranking public official of the City of Amsterdam,⁴⁷ who provided most of the object illustrations which the original manuscript did not already supply.⁴⁸ For this purpose, Schijnvoet could draw upon his own collection as well as on his network of fellow-collectors, as is documented by his end-of-chapter remarks in *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer*.

The Amboinsche Rariteitkamer served amateur shell collectors as a manual,⁴⁹ or as a collectors item to supplement their cabinets.⁵⁰ The natural objects described by Rumphius were collected in Europe for various (often multiple) reasons, depending on the case. The cultural appropriation by collecting provided shells, stones and other objects with new and different meanings: they became an investment, a status symbol, a source of material pleasure and of scientific *curiositas*.⁵¹ In displaying the variety and abundance of creation, the collection also served to glorify God, and thus became an object of religious contemplation. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the religious symbolism of the collection was front and centre; in the course of the eighteenth century, the theological meaning became a part of empirical description. The wonderful anatomies and structures, the infinite appropriateness and beauty of nature became the means through which the greatness of the Creator was recognized.⁵² Rumphius's *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* not only served to ground a collection scientifically; it also provided it with a religious foundation – Rumphius repeatedly emphasizes a teleological argument for the glory of the Creator in his book.

Simon Schijnvoet's collection was organized according to the scheme of the four elements, with stones and minerals representing earth,

⁴⁷ Roemer G. van de, *De geschikte natuur: Theorieën over natuur en kunst in de verzameling van zeldzaamheden van Simon Schijnvoet (1652–1727)* (Amsterdam: 2005) 29, 110–114.

⁴⁸ Beckman, "Introduction" XC.

⁴⁹ Benthem Jutting, "Rumphius and Malacology" 196.

⁵⁰ Waals J. van der, "Met boek en plaat. Het boeken- en atlasbezit van verzamelaars", in Bergvelt – Kistemaker (eds.), *De wereld binnen handbereik* 205.

⁵¹ Gelder R. van, "De wereld binnen handbereik: Nederlandse kunst- en rariteitenverzamelingen, 1585–1735" in: Bergvelt – Kistemaker (eds.), *De wereld binnen handbereik* 34–36; Gelder R. van, 'Noordnederlandse verzamelingen in de zeventiende eeuw', in: Bergvelt E. – Meijers D. – Rijnders M. (eds.), *Verzamelen: Van rariteitenkabinet tot kunstmuseum* (Heerlen: 1993) 137–139.

⁵² Jorink E., *Het Boeck der Natuere: Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods Schepping, 1575–1715* (Leiden: 2007) 357–358.

shells representing water, insects representing the air, and coins and art objects representing fire.⁵³ This way of organizing appears to have been based on the guiding theory of *macrocosmos in microcosmo* used in many other contemporary collections.⁵⁴ Encyclopaedic variety in the context of systematic order served to illustrate the beauty and regularity of nature and art.⁵⁵ Schijnvoet made use of Rumphius's system when he organized his collection of shells,⁵⁶ although he did not own shells from Ambon exclusively. The illustrations he used to complete Rumphius's book also depicted shells from the Mediterranean, from West Africa and from the Antilles.⁵⁷ Ernst Ullmann criticizes this approach: Schijnvoet, he says, did not really understand Rumphius's intention, otherwise he would not have included depictions from all over the world. Rumphius's interest was to describe the fauna of a certain region, while Schijnvoet's concern was to present the centrepieces of his collections.⁵⁸ What has been handed down by them speaks for itself, though. Schijnvoet's collection of shells is part of a group of collections symbolizing the four elements as an analogy linking the microcosmos and the macrocosmos. The scope of Rumphius's *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer*, by contrast, is already localized in its title. Each of its objects includes the Ambonese name, most include descriptions of their respective habitats and locations on and around Ambon, while ethnographic information and anecdotes provide additional *couleur locale*. In this sense, Rumphius's book describes not so much nature in general as the natural environment and culture of Ambon. For his European readers, his book symbolizes first and foremost the far away and exotic. Its illustrations and descriptions re-present what was absent, even when those objects already belonged to a collection. For his book takes the objects from the curiosity cabinet – lying in a drawer organized according to colour, shape and size – and gives them back their original natural and cultural context – hence their lives.

⁵³ Roemer, *De geschikte natuur* 3–4.

⁵⁴ Grote A. (ed.), *Macrocosmos in microcosmo. Die Welt in der Stube. Zur Geschichte des Sammelns 1450 bis 1800* (Opladen: 1994).

⁵⁵ Roemer, *De geschikte natuur* 192–195.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 115–118.

⁵⁷ Coomans, "Schelpenverzamelingen" 194.

⁵⁸ Ullmann E., *Maria Sibylla Merian: Leningrader Aquarelle* (Luzern: 1974) 123; critically on this: Roemer, *De geschikte natuur* 111–114.

Conclusion

The network of trade between the East Indies and Europe established by the Dutch East India Company was also a knowledge network. Material objects were transferred for economic and sometimes for scientific purposes. Objects became agents of knowledge transfer and cultural appropriation. The organization of objects, their systems of classification and their forms of representation reveal the ideas and culture of their collectors. I have shown that objects can manifest identity and alterity, and influence the way in which a foreign culture is understood.⁵⁹

My paper has analysed practices of knowledge transfer and cultural appropriation using the example of Georg Everhard Rumphius's *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer*. What was new about this book – besides the thorough descriptions of crustaceans, molluscs and minerals that had largely been unknown in Europe until then – was the fact that its contents were for the largest part based on autopsy and that for all specimens extensive contextual information was given by an observer who had been living and doing research on site for many years and had gained profound information on the basis of his acquaintance with the indigenous population. It took decades, even centuries, before the scientific benefit of *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* was adequately appreciated. As Rumphius's dedication and the circumstances of the publication of the book show, the collectors of shells and other exotic curiosities were its primary addressees. When used as an additional source and supplement of a collection of rarities, the knowledge transferred by *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* underwent a shift of meaning, as was briefly demonstrated by the example of Simon Schijnvoet and his collection. The process of cultural appropriation can be shown on the one hand by relating Schijnvoet's collection to Rumphius's findings, as has been done by Gijsbert van de Roemer.⁶⁰ On the other hand a comparative study of the two voices present in *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* would certainly be worthwhile. Beside the voice of Rumphius, the observer and researcher on site, there is the voice of Simon Schijnvoet, the Amsterdam collector, who adds information and illustrations drawing

⁵⁹ Bracher Ph. – Hertweck F. – Schröder St., "Dinge in Bewegung. Reiseliteraturforschung und Material Culture Studies", in idem (eds.), *Materialität auf Reisen: Zur kulturellen Transformation der Dinge* (Berlin: 2006) 15–16.

⁶⁰ See Roemer, *De geschikte natuur*.

on his European network of fellow collectors. Already in the book, the acquisition of the newly transferred knowledge and the cultural appropriation of the objects and the information connected to them can be traced. This intriguing process surely deserves further investigation.

D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer, like its author Rumphius, functions as a connecting link between a local, Ambonese and a European knowledge-network. The actors of the European network are mentioned by name in the text – for example the collectors D'Acquet en Schijnvoet, the printer Halma, several members of the *Academia Naturae Curiosorum* or the naturalist Andreas Cleyer, apothecary of the VOC in Batavia from 1676 to 1682⁶¹ – or they can be traced with the aid of other sources – like the governors-general who supported Rumphius and the secretaries and draughtsmen provided by the Company.⁶² The members of the autochthonous network, however, Rumphius's indigenous informants, are only present in the text insofar as Rumphius documented the names, medical applications and ritual meanings of objects provided by them. As a result of the unequal availability of sources about the two networks, the members of the indigenous knowledge-network remain mere 'shadows' in *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer*.

⁶¹ See Rumphius, *Curiosity Cabinet* 505, n. 39.

⁶² See the names mentioned by Beekman, "Introduction" LXII–LXIII.

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ANTIQUARIAN AMBONESE: FRANÇOIS VALENTYN'S COMPARATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY (1724)

Siegfried Huigen

François Valentyn's multivolume *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* ('Old and New East Indies', 1724–1726) contains two pages with the proud words of the Alifuru (*Alfoer*) 'king' Pelimao (177–8).¹ The subaltern other, *about* whom colonial texts usually speak, seems to be speaking himself and moreover defends himself convincingly.²

According to Valentyn Pelimao was deviously taken captive in Ceram in 1678 by order of Governor De Vicq, and taken to Fort Victoria on Ambon where De Vicq wanted to adjudicate him for killing his Christian subjects. To a contemporary reader the governor's actions are reminiscent of the International Court of Justice's punishing of violations of human rights, despite leaders' claims to sovereignty.³ Like all despots, Pelimao considered his actions against his subjects legitimate. During his interrogation he stated very clearly that there were no legal grounds for keeping him captive:

I am [...] a free born King, who is neither a subject of you nor of anybody else; and who, as a consequence, is not obliged to give you any reasons for my actions with regard to my subjects. Would I have offended you in your lands, I would declare myself guilty, and accept that you had me arrested in such treacherous manner [...]; but at this moment I declare myself free of all guilt of having wronged you in any way (177) [Fig. 1].

¹ The citations of and references to Valentyn in this chapter are taken from Valentyn's "Beschryvinge van Amboina"; Valentyn F., *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* [...]. (Dordrecht-Amsterdam, Van Braam and Onder de Linden: 1724–1726) 2, 1, 1–351; unless otherwise indicated I make use of Fisch's citation method (Fisch J., *Hollands Ruhm in Asien. François Valentyns Vision des niederländischen Imperiums im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: 1986) 142–146).

² I follow Coronil's use of the term subaltern: 'Dominance and subalternity are not inherent, but relational characterisations. Subalternity defines not the being of a subject, but is a subjected state of being'. Accordingly a captive indigenous king can be called 'subaltern' (Coronil F., "Listening to the Subaltern: The Poetics of Neocolonial States", *Poetics Today* 15 (1994) 649).

³ This comparison is perhaps less far-fetched than it seems: see Pagden on the origin of the concept of 'human rights' in a colonial context (Pagden A., "Human Rights, Natural Rights, and Europe's Imperial Legacy", *Political Theory* 31, 2 (2003) 171–199).

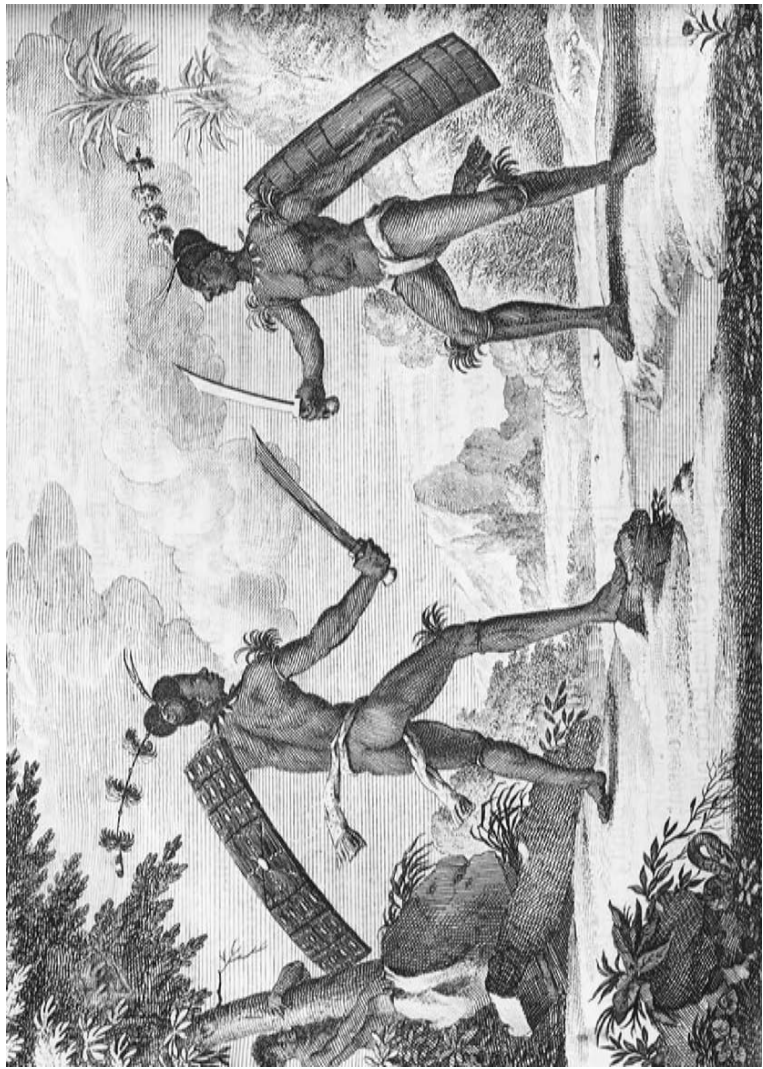


Fig. 1. Anonymous, *Alifuru warrior*, in François Valentyn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* (Amsterdam-Dordrecht, Van Braam & Onder de Linden: 1724). Stellenbosch, University of Stellenbosch, Gericke Library.

Valentyn agreed with Pelimao. In Valentyn's account of these events Pelimao was a sovereign heathen 'king' and an ally of the Dutch East India Company on the island of Ceram. He was no gentleman though. When some of Pelimao's subjects converted to Christianity – in an attempt to sidestep the yearly compulsory tributes to Pelimao, according to Valentyn – he punished them (the Christian teachers in particular) severely in order to discourage potential tax evaders. Pelimao 'tied them to poles, cut off their male parts, and others' hands, feet, noses and ears, throwing them to the dogs' (176). Nor did the women escape this cruelty; their breasts were cut off and they were burnt with blazing rods on their in- and outsides. A number of Alifuru Christians consequently fled to Fort Victoria on Ambon, the main seat of Dutch authority in the Moluccas, to ask Governor De Vicq for help. He in turn contacted Philip du Pree, secretary to the court of justice, to take Pelimao to Ambon, and have him stand trial. Because Du Pree was a bosom friend of Pelimao's and was dearly trusted by him, an armed engagement was deemed unnecessary. Equipped with exchange goods and a few soldiers for support Du Pree left for Ceram where he lured Pelimao to his boat and had him drink too much. As the king awoke during the return journey at sea he realised that he had been betrayed by his best friend (176–177).⁴

In Ambon Pelimao was locked in a narrow jail and interrogated. Years later Valentyn recorded Pelimao's response in a personal interview with 'a very competent judge, who talked many times with him [Pelimao] about this matter' (179). According to Valentyn Pelimao's response was 'extraordinary for a heathen and Alifuru' (177), and conveyed something about the intellectual capacity of inhabitants of Ambon:

[...] if there are people among the Alifuru who are able to argue clearly and sensibly about matters of interest and rights to which they are entitled, then surely among the Ambonese, after so many years of association with the Dutch and with so many occasions to improve their intellect, there should be many people who are more able and smarter than this monarch (175).

⁴ Knaap G.J., *Kruidnagelen en Christenen. De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de bevolking van Ambon 1656–1696* (Leiden: 2004) 80–81, gives another version of this incident that is based on documents from the archives of the Dutch East India Company. According to Knaap, Pelimao (Pelimau) was a Muslim and his betrayer not Du Pree (Du Préc), but a local *radja*. Both versions are consistent about the events leading to Pelimao's arrest.

On the basis of Pelimao's actions Valentyn tries to convince his readers that there is nothing wrong with the intellectual capacities of the inhabitants of Ambon. The Pelimao episode serves as an exemplary conclusion to Valentyn's ethnographic account "Van de Amboineesen" ("About the Ambonese"; 138–189) in the section 'Beschryvinge van Amboina' ("Description of Ambon"), volume two of *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, 1724.⁵ In this remarkable treatise on the inhabitants of Ambon in the central Moluccas,⁶ Valentyn tries to put the apparent strangeness of the Ambonese into perspective, while generating different forms of knowledge at the same time. The Pelimao incident played an important role in Valentyn's objectives. For this reason I will come back to Pelimao at the end of the essay.

Comparative Methodology

"Van de Amboineesen" is the most ambitious and most extensive of the ethnographic accounts in *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*. Valentyn follows a relatively refined comparative methodology where he compares the manners and customs of the Ambonese people (see table 1) with those of peoples from the classical world and the Jews from the Old Testament. Valentyn also draws on comparisons with other nations and incidentally even refers to the ancestors of the eighteenth-century Dutch. In the same way that Ambonese people extracted salt from the ashes of driftwood, for example, the Dutch 'in earlier times' extracted salt 'from the earth, which is daily washed by the sea' (161–162).⁷ 'Van de Amboineesen' is based on a combination of autopsy and reading of what he observed during his years of residence on Ambon and excerpted as comparative evidence in his library [Fig. 2].

⁵ "Beschryvinge van Amboina" (Valentyn, 1724: 2, 1, 1–351); "Van de Amboineesen" (Valentyn, 1724: 2, 1, 138–189). The Pelimao incident is followed by a section on Ambonese nautical technology which is of lesser significance to the present perspective on the Ambonese.

⁶ Valentyn's definition of the Ambonese as inhabitants of Ambon seems to correspond to Bartels' present-day definition. See Bartels D., *In de schaduw van de berg Ninusaku. Een cultuur-historische verhandeling over de bevolking van de Midden-Molukken* (Utrecht: 1994) 28–29. Knaap uses the term 'Ambonese' also for the inhabitants of Ceram and Buru (Knaap G.J., "De Ambonse eilanden tussen twee mogendheden", in Locher-Scholten E. and Rietbergen P.J.A.N. (eds.), *Hof en handel. Aziatische vorsten en de VOC, 1620–1720* (Leiden: 2004) 27–39).

⁷ Valentyn used Livinus Lemnius's well-known work *De occultis naturae miraculis* (1573), Book 3, chapter 3 as source.

Table 1. Topics in "Van de Amboineesen" (Valentyn 1724: 2, 1, 138–189).

Cannibalism	(138)
'Ignorance' of the Ambonese	(138–141)
'Superstition'	(142–150)
Various 'strange customs'	(151–152)
Marriage practices	(152–155)
Eating habits	(155–162)
Musical instruments, dances and songs	(162–165)
Houses	(166–168)
Clothing	(168–170)
Ornaments	(170–174)
Writing	(175)
Discretion	(175–179)
Revengefulness	(179–180)
Few invalids	(180)
Old people	(180–181)
Weapons	(181–182)
Vessels	(182–189)

Comparative ethnography was no novel discipline at the beginning of the eighteenth century; it had for instance repeatedly been applied since the sixteenth century to explain the origin of American Indians. Similarities between Indian customs and those of ancient peoples validated the idea that the Indians originated from Asia, Africa or Europe before emigrating to the Americas. In this way it could be argued that the Indians were one of the tribes of Israel, Scythes, Ethiopians or Vikings.⁸ There was much debate about the favoured candidates, for example in Holland between Hugo de Groot (Grotius) and Johannes de Laet on account of De Groot's *De Origine Gentium Americanarum Dissertatio* (1642).⁹ A similar ethnographic methodology was followed in determining the origin of the fairly isolated Khoikhoi (Hottentots) at the Cape of Good Hope.¹⁰

⁸ Ryan M.T., "Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, 4 (1981) 519–538; Pagden A., *The Fall of Natural Man. The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: 1982); Rubiès J.-P., "Hugo Grotius's Dissertation on the Origin of the American Peoples and the Use of Comparative Methods", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52, 2 (1991) 221–244.

⁹ See Rubiès, "Hugo Grotius's Dissertation".

¹⁰ Huigen S., *Knowledge and Colonialism. Eighteenth-Century Travellers at the Cape* (Leiden – Boston: 2009), chapter 2.



Fig. 2. Anonymous, *Ambonese warrior* (right), engraving in François Valentyn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* (Amsterdam-Dordrecht, Van Braam & Onder de Linden: 1724). Stellenbosch, University of Stellenbosch, Gericke Library.

Valentyn was familiar with publications on this subject. In his library was a French translation of José de Acosta's well-known *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590) in which Indian customs are compared with those of the Ancients, in addition to a Dutch translation of *I viaggi di Pietro della Valle* (1658) in which Pietro della Valle compares Hinduism in India with religious practices from the classical world.¹¹ For his description of the Cape Colony, Valentyn made extensive use of Peter Kolb's recently published *Capvt Bonae Spei Hodiernvm* (1719), in which Kolb claims the Cape Khoikhoi were descendents of the Jews.¹² Valentyn formulated a comparative model for the Ambonese, according to which the Ambonese were ranked in a universal scale of development of humanity, and by which he tried to generate insights for biblical exegesis. The complexity of the model at the beginning of the eighteenth century was equalled only by that of Joseph-François Lafitau (1681–1746), author of *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (1724), wherein Lafitau describes the Indians of Canada. Valentyn had a copy of the book in his library,¹³ but since the publication date of Lafitau's book was the same as that of 'Van de Amboineesen' in *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, it is unlikely that Valentyn had taken his ideas from Lafitau. The fact that Lafitau's book had been purchased somewhere between 1724 and Valentyn's death in 1727 clearly indicates an exceptional interest in comparative ethnography.

As far as I can determine Valentyn had two aims with his comparative ethnographic methodology: he wanted to mitigate existing Dutch caricatured representations of the Ambonese and generate ethnological knowledge that would amongst other things be useful for biblical exegesis. In its implementation there existed a great deal of concurrence between these aims. Every contextualisation of strange (from a Dutch perspective) Ambonese practices increased ethnographic knowledge, and every scholarly comparison that was drawn between the Ambonese and ancient peoples gave the Ambonese a share in

¹¹ *Auction catalogue* with title "Acosta: Libri in Oct. & min. form." 50, nr. 735; *Auction catalogue* with title "Della Valla: Libri Hist. & Misc. in Quarto" 103, nr. 677: "Reisbeschryving van Pietro della Valle".

¹² Kolb P., *Capvt Bonae Spei Hodiernvm: das ist, Vollständige Beschreibung des Afrikanischen Vorgebürges der Guten Hofnung* (Nürnberg, Monath: 1719); Huigen, *Knowledge and Colonialism*, chapter 2.

¹³ *Auction catalogue*, 97, nr. 614. See Motsch A., *Lafitau et l'émergence du discours ethnographique* (Sillery, Québec: 2001).

the qualities of cultures which were still held in high esteem by every European who was 'well-read in Greek and Roman history' (139). Considering the list of subscribers to *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* – among them many members of the patriciate and lawyers – such an erudite reader was perhaps also the real reader of Valentyn's book. Another important aspect of Valentyn's methodology was that his comparisons operated in two directions: Ambonese practices were clarified with reference to the ancient world and Antiquity and the Bible could be better understood by studying the Ambonese people.¹⁴

'Foolish Thoughts'

At the beginning of the section 'Van de Amboineesen' Valentyn puts into perspective practices that were considered by the Dutch as problematic, with the explicit intention to reduce their strange or offensive nature. In the latter part of the text parallels are drawn that have no moral significance (see table 2). Most of these concern Jewish practices from the Old Testament.

As far as Valentyn responded to a European perspective, he countered most probably the negative view of the Ambonese that prevailed among local Dutch colonial officials. As a former member of the Ambon colonial elite he would have been more than familiar with such opinions.¹⁵ In the 'Memorie van Overgave' ('Memorandum of the transfer of power') from 1706 of Governor Balthasar Coyett, for example, it is stated: 'that the Ambonese are ignorant, insolent, presumptuous (particularly the Moors [Muslims] from the coast of Hitu and Manipa) and lazy people, is well known to everybody here.'¹⁶ The Ambonese were moreover servile and quarrelsome according to Coyett. 'Everybody here' was of the same opinion, which would

¹⁴ Lafitau did the same. In his case the comparisons had to result in a mutual explanation of the religious practices of the Indians and pagan Greeks and Romans (Lafitau J.-F., *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (Paris: 1724) 3–4).

¹⁵ Valentyn lived in the Moluccas, and specifically Ambon, from 1686 to 1694 and 1706 to 1714.

¹⁶ Knaap G.J., *Memories van overgave van gouverneurs van Ambon in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (s-Gravenhage: 1987) 291. Rumphius was in 1679 of a similar opinion: 'It is true that Ambon produces a wild and stupid people, dim-witted and not at all curious', see Buijze W. (ed.), *De generale lant-beschrijvinge van het Ambonse Gouvernement ofwel De Ambonsche Lant-beschrijvinge door G.E. Rumphius* (The Hague: 2001) 2.

probably have been applicable to officials in the governor's entourage. Couyett's predecessor, Gysels, had earlier described the Ambonese as 'timid', disloyal, superstitious and, in one report about their goldsmith's trade, as 'big louts who had no science other than the forgery of gold and silver'.¹⁷

Valentyn tries to create a more nuanced image of the Ambonese by concentrating on their intellectual capacities. They were not, according to him, as stupid as it seemed. It is, however, not obvious whether he presented an argument that was directed at undermining established views or whether he just put these views into perspective because he thought the 'facts' were more complicated than the simplistic opinions of a superficial Dutch observer would have believe. Valentyn did not at any rate reject disapproving opinions in his description of the Ambonese, but rather used the blunt disapproval of the Ambonese as a point of departure to create a more balanced perspective.

Already at the start of his treatise he introduces an example of such disapproval. Of the Ambonese he says: 'Traditionally they were a rough, wild, insolent, listless, melancholic, stupid, and a most gullible people, although they have changed in recent times' (138). On other occasions he also uses similar denigrating characteristics,¹⁸ but mostly puts them into perspective by presenting the 'foolishness' of the Ambonese as a characteristic that belongs to the primitive developmental phase of man, which, in earlier times, was also present in the Greeks and Romans.

The first of the characteristics that Valentyn puts into perspective are the Ambonese myths of origin, which would seem typical of their stupidity and ignorance (138). When one compares them to Roman myths, however, these characteristics do not seem unique to the Ambonese:

One can infer their [the Ambonese] limited powers of reason from the incredible stories which they tell about their origin. Some say that they are descended from crocodiles, others from chairs made of bamboo or hollow trees, and other such things. [...] I have known some, during my residence, who rigidly upheld this and who pretended to be descended from a crocodile, and, in consequence, imagined to have the most noble lineage in the land, no less than those related to the gods among the Romans (139).

¹⁷ Knaap, *Memories van overgave* 45, 51, 53, 60.

¹⁸ Valentyn, 1724: 2, 1: 139, 142, 147, 148, 149–150.

After giving a few more examples of Ambonese myths of origin, Valentyn narrows down his comparison with Greek and Roman tales. The reader who was familiar with Greek and Roman history, would after all also be acquainted with strange tales from Antiquity, such as ‘that people, when they did not know their ancestry and did not want to be perceived as bastards, were called *Terrae Filii*, sons of the earth or grown from the earth, or, when they were of noble lineage, *Heroum, vel Deorum Filii*, sons of heroes or gods’ (139).¹⁹ Valentyn’s elaboration of the idea that the Greeks and Romans also nourished strange ideas about their origin is followed by a series of fanciful myths of origin from classical Antiquity. One of the strangest antique tales is that everything has originated from an egg (140). Valentyn subsequently uses the egg motif to make a comparison with the Bible,²⁰ which he uses in a similar ethnographical fashion as historical source as other texts:

That everything would take its origin from an egg, is a very old idea, which has its source in Gen. 1:2, where the Spirit of God is moving upon the face of the waters, because, according to many scholars, the root word [for God’s Spirit *moving*] in reality refers to the action of a bird, spreading its wings, sitting on eggs. (140)

Since the Hebrew tales in *Genesis* are the oldest tales,²¹ heathen myths about the world originating from an egg would have been deduced from Genesis 1:2. According to ‘many scholars’, the Hebrew word for ‘[the Spirit of God] *moving* [upon the face of the waters]’ was also used for describing the spreading wings of a brooding bird. Therefore, by way of an etymological approach, Valentyn established a connection between the biblical narrative and heathen myths, whose resemblance to Ambonese tales had already been proven. Valentyn follows a similar argumentation for the heathen myth about the sons of Saturn who

¹⁹ This view was borrowed from Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, X: ‘[...] nam et terrae filios vulgus vocat quorum genus incertum est’ ([...] common people called them sons of the earth, of whom their origin is unknown’).

²⁰ Valentyn made use of the seventeenth-century Dutch translation of the Bible, the so-called *Statenvertaling* (1637). References and quotations in this essay are from the King James Version.

²¹ Since it was assumed that Hebrew was the oldest language, pagan myths would have been mere hybridised derivatives of the godly revelation in the Scriptures (Seznec J., *The Survival of the Pagan Gods. The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (New York: 1953) 250).

were known as *Terrae filii*, the sons of the earth. According to Valentyn the Latin expression was derived from the Hebrew word for Adam, which literally means 'red earth'. Based on the existence of strange myths of origin in Greek and Roman culture, and the etymological relation between these myths and the Bible, Valentyn concludes that the Ambonese views on their origin were indeed 'stupid', but that peoples whom no-one believes that they were mentally impaired had similar myths: 'Everything which we have referred to, serves to establish that such stupid opinions were common with the wisest peoples on earth during the first times, as much as with the Ambonese' (141).²² The belief in 'stupid' myths of origin was thus no indication that a people suffered from serious mental impairment; it was rather a side effect of a primitive developmental phase.

The comparative ethnographic methodology that operated in the given examples served as a form of rhetorical *inventio* whereby Valentyn constructed an argument by way of comparison (*loci a simili*) in order to mitigate the discourse on the Ambonese in the circles of Dutch colonial officials. Valentyn does not attempt to turn a *vituperatio*, an exceptionally negative statement, into a positive representation, but rather into something in-between, a *dubium*.²³ When disagreeable and strange characteristics, habits and views of the Ambonese appeared to be present also in ancient cultures such as those of the Batavians (ancient Dutch), Britons, Greeks or Romans, and in the Bible, this comparative methodology could to a certain extent help to lessen the foreignness of the Ambonese and make their habits more acceptable. The strange customs of the Ambonese after all had equivalents in the earlier phases of European history, which softened their despicability. Where similarities were drawn with ancient Jews, Greeks or Romans, the effect of contextualisation was most notable as the Ambonese shared in the exemplariness of these peoples. A comparison with the Batavians would likewise have had a sympathetic effect on the Dutch readers who since the sixteenth century had learned that the primitive Batavians were their ancestors.

²² Valentyn relies on a rich mythographical tradition where pagan mythology was reconciled with the Christian revelation. See Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*. In the eighteenth century the view that people descended from the earth was considered a topos of backwardness. Cf. Johnson J.W., "Of Differing Ages and Climes", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21, 4 (1960) 465–480.

²³ Lausberg H., *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* (Munich: 1960) 57–58, 129–136, 217, 230.

Under the theme 'head-hunters', for instance, Valentyn mentions the Batavians' bloodlust alongside acts of bloodlust of other nations. The Ambonese were not the only head-hunters; headhunts were common 'among most of Orientals [...] the Persians, Mongolians, Turks and Ethiopians', in the Old Testament (Holofernes and Goliath), and in Vergil's *Aeneid* (Priam). In the army of the Batavian leader Claudius Civilis, killing the enemy (not outright head-hunting) was an initiation ritual: 'As long as the soldiers of Claudius Civilis had not slain an enemy, they were not allowed to cut their hair or beard, and they were not allowed to wear an iron arm ring!' (150). A pungent aspect of the Ambonese head-hunting was moreover that triumphant warriors were received by drummer women and girls who, according to Valentyn, showed similarities with the drumming virgins in *Psalm* 68:26 and 1 *Samuel* 18:6–7.²⁴ The likening of the Ambonese women to the biblical virgins thus softens the atrocious bloodlust of the Ambonese head-hunters.

Using this rhetorical strategy to put seemingly improper exotic practices into perspective was already common in José de Acosta's approach at the end of the sixteenth century. In his introduction to the moral history of America, Acosta warns his reader:

In case that anybody would start wondering about some of the ceremonies and customs of the Indians and loathe them as if they were unnatural and awkward, or reject them as being blasphemous and diabolical, that person should have a look at what the Greeks and Romans (who ruled the world) did, and see if they did not do similar and sometimes worse things, as can easily be understood from our [Christian] authors and also from their own [authors] [...].²⁵

The Jesuit Acosta found the reason behind the similarities between Indian and ancient Greek and Roman practices in the doings of the 'Prince of Darkness'. This was of no importance to the enlightened

²⁴ 'The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels' (*Psalm* 68: 25); 'And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands' (1 *Samuel* 18: 6–7).

²⁵ Acosta J. de, *Historie Naturael en Morael van de Westersche Indien*, trans. Jan Huygen van Linschoten (Amsterdam, Hendrick Laurensz.: 1624) fol. 92r.

Reverend Valentyn, for it would not have helped him to explain biblical text passages on the basis of observations of Ambonese customs.

'Any that pisseth against the wall'

Valentyn also had scholarly ambitions with 'Van de Amboineesen' and even suggests that he would like to publish a separate book on ethnology.²⁶ As in his scientific endeavours, his ethnographic practice largely consisted of the *collection* of parallel comparisons with customs and objects as described in the Bible and literary texts from Classical Antiquity (see table 2). It is moreover conspicuous that Valentyn introduced comparisons with the Bible without reservation. Comparisons of Ambonese customs with those from classical Antiquity were unproblematic since both concerned alien, non-Christian cultures; comparisons with the Bible, however, were more problematic. Early modern travel accounts and chorographies usually represented a biased, negative account of non-western practices; religious customs, for example, were represented as demonically inspired parodies of Christianity, according to Acosta,²⁷ or as misrepresentations of an original holy revelation.²⁸ Protestants likewise pointed out similarities between appalling heathen and catholic religious practices.²⁹ Valentyn, on the other hand, recorded similarities with the Bible on a neutral basis and even went a step further by applying ethnographic findings to biblical exegesis. His comparison worked both ways.

For example, when Valentyn observed household goods and sleeping quarters of the Ambonese (166), he found that they slept naked under 'a large clothe, similar to a veil, which they use to cover their body'. This reminds him of a passage from the gospel of *Mark* (14:51–52). At the moment that Jesus taken captive in Gethsemane, a mysterious figure emerged:

²⁶ He doesn't elaborate on this specific comparison because it 'would take us beyond our scope, and should rather be restricted to a work of another nature, if still possible' (Valentyn, 1724: 2, 1, 149).

²⁷ Pagden A., *The Fall of Natural Man* 174–176; Hodgen M.T., *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: 1964) 301–302.

²⁸ Hodgen, *Early Anthropology* 302–303.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 309.

Table 2. Similarities between Ambonese customs and Greek-Roman or biblical customs in ‘Van de Amboineesen’ (138–189).

Ambonese customs, etc.	Greek-Roman equivalent	Bible equivalent
Myths of origin (138–141)	x	x
Snakes (140)	x	
Sorcery (143–144, 148–149)	x	x
Superstitions about hair (144)	x	x
Drinking water carried on head (147–148)	x	x
Head-hunters (150)	x	x
Invulnerability in battle (150–151)	x	
Urinating men in sitting position (151)		x
Women bathing in open water (151)	x	x
Use of aromatic substances (152)		x
Infant names for babies (152)		x
Children carried on hips (152)		x
Payment of dowry (153)		x
Eating habits (156)		x
Burning of grass (159)	x	
The tifa’ (162)		x
Drumming women (164)	x	x
Sleeping underneath cloth (166)		x
Bracelets (170, pl. XLXV)		x
Jewellery for the head (171–172, pl. XLXV)		x
Necklaces (174, pl. XLXV)		x
Use of drums on ships (183)	x	x

And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

Both the young man and his loose linen cloth had already become an exegetic crux at the time Valentyn made his observations. Valentyn thought to have found the answer in the Ambonese culture to what exactly the young man’s linen cloth or ‘sindoon’ (σινδών) was.

Biblical exegesis had undergone profound changes during the two centuries before Valentyn. In protestant countries allegorical medieval Bible exegesis was suppressed by historicising interpretations. Instead of attributing moral, anagogic or eschatological meaning to biblical texts after establishing the *sensus literalis* (the *quadriga*), a new generation exegetes followed in Erasmus’s footsteps by carefully reconstructing the meaning that the biblical text would have had at the time of

its origin. According to Erasmus exegetes had to be knowledgeable about the circumstances under which a text was created in order to fully grasp the intention of the author.³⁰ Biblical passages in different languages – Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and Syrian – were compared with one another and related to literary and historic data so as to understand the text in its original historical and cultural context. This was already accepted practice in classical philology.³¹ The underlying principle to this development in biblical exegesis was the realisation of the historic distance that existed between the modern interpreter and the original text; a distance that had to be bridged by philological, historical and, in rare cases, even ethnological means. The modern exegete considered the Bible as an historic document that needed interpretative annotations to be comprehended, just as literary texts from classical Antiquity. This insight produced an impressive amount of knowledge.³²

The shifts in biblical exegesis since medieval times are well illustrated by the passage in the gospel of Mark just quoted. In medieval exegesis this episode was taken as an allegory for the ‘Christian escape’ of the world in order to follow the naked Christ nakedly. The young man was moreover identified with the apostle John, as he was young and loved Jesus the most. Protestant exegetes were quick to reject this identification, because there were no hard facts to substantiate it. In protestant biblical exegesis the young man thus became an anonymous figure who appeared from nowhere.

Initially nobody deemed it necessary to comment on the *sindoon* worn by the anonymous young man, until the reformer Beza in his *Novum Testamentum* (1565) noted that the *sindoon* was a ‘chemise’. The young man would thus have appeared in his underwear. Around 1600 a small debate was stirred in exegetic circles over exactly what this garment could have been; Isaac Casaubon’s view that it was in fact

³⁰ According to the so-called *decorum* principle in exegetics, knowledge of the circumstances under which the text (passage) was created is necessary to grasp the author’s intention (Eden K., *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition. Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and its Humanist Reception* (New Haven: 1997) 73).

³¹ De Jonge H.J., “Joseph Scaliger’s Historical Criticism of the New Testament”, *Novum Testamentum* 38, 2 (1996) 177.

³² Shuger gives a brilliant overview of the development of early modern biblical exegesis (Shuger D.K., *The Renaissance Bible. Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: 1994) 11–53). See Hobbs for a case study on historical exegesis (Hobbs G.R., “How Firm a Foundation: Martin Bucer’s Historical Exegesis of the Psalms”, *Church History* 53, 4 (1984) 477–491).

a night gown was initially favoured, but in 1663 the English Hebrew scholar John Lightfoot argued instead that the young man was wearing a very thin garment during cold weather conditions, for in the very next verse Peter wanted to warm himself by the fire (*Mark* 14:53). According to Lightfoot this thin garment suggests the young man was a member of the ascetic Essenes sect. To Lightfoot the garment thus became a signifier with which he could reconstruct social structures in first-century Palestine.³³

In exegetic terms Valentyn's interpretation did not have the same range as that of Lightfoot. Valentyn only established that the Amboinese slept naked and that they used 'a large clothe, similar to a veil, [...] for covering their body'; on the basis of this observation he suggested that this clothe was the same as the *sindoon* in the gospel of Mark (166). What is remarkable, however, is that he used his own observations for exegetic purposes – ethnographer and biblical exegete was one and the same person. Isaac la Peyrère and Hugo de Groot had also used ethnographic data for their biblical commentaries, but they relied on the observations of others.³⁴

While Valentyn only incidentally introduces this case of ethnological exegesis, he pays more attention to two other cases. The first concerns the Ambonese practice of men urinating in a squatting position, which differs from the European custom. Recognizing these 'oriental' customs, Valentyn argued, one could better grasp certain text passages from the 'oriental' Old Testament:

One shall always see the men among them [the Ambonese] squatting when they urinate, despising it to urinate standing, as something becoming a dog not a man. This sheds some light on the expression from Scripture in 1 Sam. 25:34, where David says to Abigail, that if she would not have come to meet him, there had not been left unto Nabal

³³ Kermode F., *The Genesis of Secrecy. On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, MA.: 1979) 55–73; Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible* 30–1; Jackson H.M., "Why the Youth Shed His Cloak and Fleed Naked: The Meaning and Purpose of Mark 14: 51–52", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, 2 (1997) 273–289; Leithart P.J., "Critical Note. Nabal and his wine", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, 3 (2001) 525–527.

³⁴ Scholder K., *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology. Origins and Problems of Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century* (London: 1990) 86; Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible* 54–88. The general pattern was characterized by a division between biblical philologist, traveller and historian (see Miller P.N., "A Philologist, a Traveller and an Antiquary Rediscover the Samaritans in Seventeenth-Century Paris, Rome and Aix; Jean Morin, Pietro Della Valle and N.-C. Fabri de Peiresc", in Zedelmaier H. and Mulsow M. (eds.), *Die Praktiken der Gelehrsamkeit in der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: 2001) 123–146).

by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. Many scholars, who are unfamiliar with this oriental expression, interpreted it as if no man would remain alive, because it is custom among Christians that men urinate against a wall or a house. But this cannot be its meaning, because in the East not men, but only dogs do this. For this reason the true meaning of these words is that David will not even let a dog live, or, as we would say no cat or dog (151).³⁵

Valentyn's ethnological interpretation, equating Ambonese toilet habits with those of Jewish people in the Old Testament, had implications for the meaning of the biblical narrative. On the basis of his observations on Ambon Valentyn interpreted the biblical expression 'any that pisseth against the wall', which generally implies 'men', as a metonym for 'no dog', meaning 'nobody'. Thus David did not just threaten to kill all *men* of the house of Nabal, but wanted nobody ('no dog') to be left alive. The consequence of such a reading, however, is that even the virtuous Abigail's life would have been in danger. By following a myopic approach to interpreting ways of urinating, Valentyn forgets about the exegetic principle of contextualising difficult passages in terms of that which precedes and follows the passage. Isolating a text passage from its context was seen as a violation of the principle of unbiased exegesis and detrimental to the author's intention.³⁶

Ambonese toilet habits offered more exegetic windfalls. In his wanderings on Ambon Valentyn had also observed that 'the Natives [Ambonese] do not use a privy, but open their bowels in the forest or on the beach'. Given the proposed similarities between ancient Jews and the modern Ambonese, Valentyn must have assumed that the Jews likewise did not have toilets and relieved themselves wherever the opportunity arose. On the basis of this perspective one could better grasp 1 *Sam.* 24:4, 'where it is said that Saul went into a cave to cover his feet' (151). Based on his Ambonese observations Valentyn assumed that the Jews also relieved themselves anywhere, for example in a cave. With this newfound insight, however, he inadvertently created confusion because it is now unclear whether Saul urinated or defecated in the cave.

³⁵ 1 *Samuel* 25:34: 'For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall'.

³⁶ Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition* 73–75.

Valentyn devoted a great deal of attention to Ambonese jewellery, most probably to temper Dutch prejudice against the lack of technical abilities of the Ambonese. A Dutch governor after all had remarked that all the Ambonese were capable of was forging gold and silver. Valentyn, however, is full of praise for the aesthetic quality of Ambonese jewellery and indicates clearly where he had examined it. The reader can moreover admire representations of the jewellery on an additional page. Discussing them Valentyn makes another exegetic discovery, namely that the Ambonese had bracelets which they wore on their foreheads. These jewellery pieces were, according to Valentyn, 'the oldest jewellery of the Orientals', since according to Scripture (*Genesis* 24: 22, 30, 47) they had already been worn at the time of Abraham and in the Hebrew Bible are called 'nezem' (171). None of the exegetes Valentyn had consulted mentioned what this 'nezem' jewellery looked like, but thanks to Valentyn's effort his reader could now see a representation of it on the head of the former Chinese captain's wife on Plate XLV, under the letter D³⁷[Fig. 3].

Valentyn was above all interested in the material culture of the Jewish people: jewellery, defecating and urinating, the young man's 'veil' in the gospel of Mark and also the Ambonese word for drum ('Tifa') that would relate to the Hebrew word for drum ('Toph').³⁸ It was an historic and philological interest that indeed had the purpose of discovering the original (*germanus*) meaning of the Scriptures, but at most had limited or unintentional exegetic implications. In Valentyn's exegesis the Ambonese realia were nothing more than curious supplements to passages from the Bible.

Valentyn's comparative ethnography and biblical exegesis naturally calls to question the justification of the comparison. What was the *tertium comparationis*? For a start he assumes a geographically defined ontological base, according to which Jews from the Old Near East and the Ambonese from seventeenth and eighteenth century Southeast Asia could be regarded as belonging to the same cultural group, namely the 'Orientals'. He argued that all Oriental people had a uniform way of living; observations of the Ambonese would therefore be

³⁷ Peter Burke points to the increasing use of visual material as evidence in seventeenth century books (Burke P., "Images as Evidence in Seventeenth-Century Europe", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64, 2 (2003) 273–296).

³⁸ It was generally assumed that Hebrew was the oldest language (Hodgen, *Early Anthropology* 307).

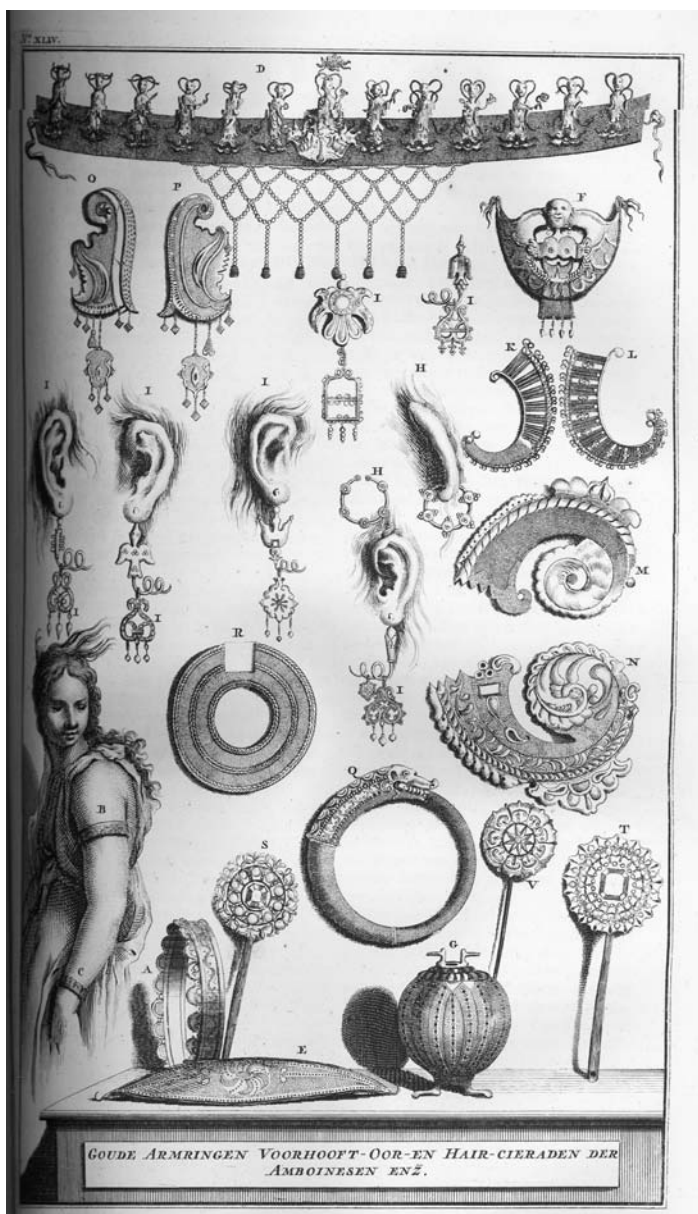


Fig. 3. Anonymous, *Head jewellery from Ambon*. Engraving from François Valentyn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* (Amsterdam-Dordrecht, Van Braam & Onder de Linden: 1724). Stellenbosch, University of Stellenbosch, Gericke Library. Valentyn considered this head jewellery similar to jewellery in the Hebrew Bible.

useful for interpretations of the Bible. Everyday articles and behaviour of the Ambonese are similar to those in the Bible, for Orientals never change: '...the customs of the Orientals are collectively like this, and once they have adopted some habit, they stick to it for ever' (151). To Valentyn, Ambon was a large open air museum, potentially also in terms of those habits that he did not directly relate to the Bible. According to Valentyn's ethnology one could observe there first hand how the Jews supposedly have lived.

Valentyn at the same time noticed similarities between the Ambonese and other peoples from Antiquity, because all of them shared the 'first times'. This temporal construction resulted in what Reinhart Koselleck called 'Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen' ('contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous').³⁹ Valentyn explained cultural differences as time differences by allocating the Ambonese, with whom he shared 'natural time', to a diffuse, archaic period which in European history had lasted more than a thousand years and to which not only the Greeks and Romans belonged, but also the ancient Batavians and Jews. This line of thought was already common with Greek writers and became very popular with nineteenth-century anthropologists who, according to Johannes Fabian, used this topos to portray the other as backward and inferior.⁴⁰ In Valentyn's case the topos was used to familiarise and revalue the other. As we have seen, the comparison with Greeks and Romans served a rhetoric purpose, namely to indicate that the Ambonese were not as strange or objectionable as Valentyn's Dutch colleagues thought they were.⁴¹ Classical Antiquity

³⁹ Koselleck R., "Fortschritt", in Brunner O. – Koselleck R. (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* II (Stuttgart: 1975) 391. For Koselleck this identification of non-western culture with earlier periods from European history was only one example of 'Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen' (contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous), which he saw as the foundation of an historic awareness.

⁴⁰ Fabian talks about 'denial of coevalness' (Fabian J., *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: 1983) 1, 31). Due to undesirable anachronistic associations with nineteenth-century anthropology it is better not to apply Fabian's insights to Valentyn's temporal reconstruction of cultural relationships. Koselleck points out that Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle had already historicised the opposition between Greek and barbarian (Koselleck R., *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: 2004) 164).

⁴¹ Ryan's comment with reference to sixteenth-century Spanish accounts of the Indians is also relevant for Valentyn: 'There is an almost childlike joy running through these lists of conformities, as if the real discovery were not the exoticism of the other but his ultimate similarity with peoples already assimilated into European consciousness' (Ryan, "Assimilating New Worlds" 529).

after all still had exemplary meaning for Valentyn's readers. The representation of relative backwardness at least was dressed in silk.

Although Valentyn neither explicitly related his two comparative models of the Ambonese – the 'unchanging Oriental' and the 'first times' – nor used them systematically, they were distinguishable in their different applications. Both added a different value to the perspective on the Ambonese. The 'oriental' comparative model primarily lead to theoretical insights, according to which the Bible could be better understood and the Ambonese be regarded as less strange. The same holds true for the model of the 'first times', although it had potential practical consequences. It slotted the Ambonese into a developmental history of mankind, where they represented a developmental phase which was superseded in Europe. In contrast with the essentialist idea of unchanging orientalism, this model squarely positioned them in a progressive developmental history. During his stay on Ambon Valentyn had already observed that they were beginning to leave their archaic developmental phase. After his account of the idiotic Ambonese myths of origin he concludes: 'while they were like this in the old days, most of them know better now' (139). This, according to Valentyn, was on account of Dutch influence.

With this philosophy of history Valentyn belonged to the intellectual avant-garde of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Just like Bacon, Fontenelle and Malebranche, he was convinced that mankind was on its way to ever greater achievements. According to these notions of progress, Antiquity was mankind's childhood and the modern era home to more experienced people.⁴² Already in his introduction to *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* Valentyn describes how Modern Man has surpassed the Old one in navigation and geographic knowledge, a view that originated from Bacon.⁴³ Valentyn's philosophy of history in 'Van de Amboineesen' borders on that of Fontenelle who had published *De l'origine des fables* in the same year (plagiarism is thus ruled out). In it he claims that 'fables' originated in the ignorant minds of

⁴² On the notion of progress around 1700 see: Koselleck, "Fortschritt", 372–378, 395–403; Nisbet R.A., *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: 1980) 112–167; Taguieff P.-A., *L'idée de progrès. Une approche historique et philosophique* (Les Cahiers du CEVIPOF 32) (2002); Schlobach J., "Progrès", in Delon M. (ed.), *Dictionnaire européen des Lumières* (Paris: 2007) 1041–1045.

⁴³ Huigen S., "De zaak Valentyn: plagiaat en wetenschappelijk decorum aan het begin van de achttiende eeuw", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 125 (2009) 22–40.

the 'first people'.⁴⁴ For both the history of mankind meant an increase in rationality, and the acquisition of a 'correct' manner of argumentation.⁴⁵ This developmental view also played a role in Pelimao's case and even had the potential of legitimising a Dutch civilizing project for Ambon.

Pelimao's Defence

The term 'first times' for the developmental phase of the Ambonese and classical Antiquity is somewhat misleading since Valentyn described an even more primitive developmental phase of which he had found traces on the islands Nusa Laut and Ceram. Until recently their inhabitants had been practising cannibals. According to Valentyn this was the legacy of generally practiced cannibalism on the Moluccas in the distant past. Valentyn took heed of the Ptolemy's view that cannibalism was practiced on the Sindae, assuming that Ptolemy was referring to the Moluccas (138).⁴⁶

Valentyn devoted more time to the Alifuru or 'mountain savages' who inhabited the interior of Ceram, and of whom he compiled an ethnographic description.⁴⁷ The Alifuru were renowned head-hunters, as a hunted head was a precondition for acquiring a wife (72–3); moreover, they murdered one another for any violation of their honour (80–1). If Acosta's developmental model in *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590), a book in Valentyn's library, is applied to these savages from Ceram, they would indeed end up with a very low ranking. Acosta distinguished three developmental phases of "barbaric" nations: nations who had writing and some form of rational thought processes, such as the Chinese and Japanese; nations without writing, but with political organisation; and lastly at the very bottom of the scale, the naked, often man-eating savages without permanent residence.⁴⁸ In Acosta's model, the Alifuru could be placed somewhere between the second and the lowest developmental stage; they did indeed walk

⁴⁴ "De l'origine des fables" was written between 1691 and 1699 and published in 1724 in *Réveries* (Taguieff, *L'idée de progrès* 55, n. 337).

⁴⁵ Taguieff, *L'idée de progrès* 56.

⁴⁶ See further Huigen, S., "De smaak van mensenvlees", *De Gids* (May 2008) 375–383.

⁴⁷ "Van de Alfocreesen" (Valentyn 1724: 2, 1, 71–82).

⁴⁸ Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man* 162–169.

around naked, but lived in villages and had a political structure. In Valentyn's opinion they had a lower level of development than the Ambonese, who were situated somewhere between the intermediate and the highest stage in Acosta's model because they produced at least *one* book, the *History of Hitu* (*Hikayat Tanah Hitu*) by Ridjali (175). In Valentyn's opinion as well as in Acosta's model, the lower developmental phase of the Alifuru indicates a limited amount of rationality. From this perspective the Alifuru king Pelimao's sensible behaviour as a captive is therefore surprising and at the same time encouraging, as it conveys something of the rational potential of the entire indigenous population of the Ambonese islands. Pelimao single-handedly belies the pessimistic expectations.

Pelimao seems to defend himself convincingly against his Dutch judges, as we have seen. He points out that they are not authorised to sentence him, and that he as sovereign ruler had committed no crime by torturing his insubordinate Christian subjects to death. He would moreover not stand in the way of the Dutch East India Company if it were to punish its own insubordinate subjects. With this argument Pelimao appealed to the best possible argumentation available within forensic rhetoric: his actions were lawful and his judges were unauthorised to sentence him.⁴⁹ The judges much later confessed to Valentyn that they should have released him. That never happened, for Pelimao was so embittered about his fate that he starved himself to death, and consequently, according to Valentyn, helped the governor out of a difficult situation.

Valentyn's account of this piece of history is remarkable. That Valentyn as a minister in the service of the Dutch East India Company would choose sides with a brute, a savage mountain king (179) and murderer of Christians is a striking sign of his sense of perspective.⁵⁰ Valentyn's appreciation for Pelimao's point of view seems to be based on a legalist way of thinking.⁵¹ Pelimao was after all an independent ally of the Dutch East India Company; a relationship that

⁴⁹ Pelimao appeals to the highest level of defence in any forensic speech, namely the *status absoluta* and the *status translationis* (Lausberg H., *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* 97–98, 83).

⁵⁰ Niemeijer H.E., "Orang Nasrani. Protestant Ambon in de zeventiende eeuw", in Schutte G.J. (ed.), *Het Indisch Sion. De Gereformeerde kerk onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Hilversum: 2002) 127–146.

⁵¹ See Skinner Q., *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. Volume Two: The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: 1978) 254–301.

had been determined under international law. In *Mare liberum* Hugo de Groot stated that 'these islands [...] have always had their own kings, their own nation states, laws and legal system'.⁵² The Dutch East India Company only claimed sovereignty over Ambon in the Moluccas because they conquered the island from the Portuguese and therefore were their legitimate successors; they did not claim Ceram.⁵³ On constitutional terms Pelimao had the right to punish tax evaders; according to Lipsius's constitutional theory the monarch could, if necessary, even wring them out.⁵⁴ Again Pelimao points out to his interrogators that they had no right to judge the way that he punished his subjects: 'With regard to the cruelties, why are you [the Dutch judges] so cruel as to hang a thief, who has stolen something? Is it not because he broke your laws and sinned against you, and in order to deter others?' (178). He thus argues that everybody had their own way of punishment, so why would it then be considered strange if a savage mountain king inflicted more severe punishment than death at the gallows? Valentyn grants Pelimao the right to determine the religion of his subjects, something that was also common practice in Europe during the *ancien régime*. By portraying him as a sovereign monarch who had been unjustly taken captive, Valentyn incidentally comments on the wayward politics of lesser colonial authorities in East Indies. According to Valentyn Governor De Vicq's action against Pelimao was a sign of reprehensible stupidity 'which happens more in the Indies, although it does not serve the honourable Company a bit' (179).

Valentyn uses the Pelimao incident mainly to convey the intellectual abilities of the inhabitants of Ambon. Pelimao proved that he could defend himself adequately; he had 'reason' (179) to 'argue' (175) and was therefore 'an example of discernment and comprehension' (175) which could be found in all inhabitants of the Ambonese islands. This incident would serve as a future reference for the Ambonese because Pelimao represented 'those who should be considered as the worst, and most ignorant', whilst many among the Ambonese, 'after so many years of association with the Dutch and so many occasions to improve

⁵² 'Habent insulae [...] et semper habuerunt suos reges, suam republicam, suas leges, sua iura'. Cited in Somers J.A., "De VOC als volkenrechtelijke actor", *Pro Memorie* 5, 2 (2003) 398.

⁵³ Ibid., 386–387.

⁵⁴ Oestreich G., *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: 1982) 47–48.

their reason, should be much brighter and smarter than this monarch, about which I let the Reader be the Judge' (175).

For two or so pages Valentyn gives his reader the opportunity to follow Pelimao's reasoning in direct and indirect speech. At the time that Valentyn arrived on Ambon, Pelimao had already been dead for eight years. Yet his speech sounds as if Valentyn had taken down his words in shorthand during his trial. Pelimao's words are reconstructed from that which 'many judges' (178), or rather 'a very competent judge' (179) had told Valentyn. It was a commonly used rhetorical technique in historiography since classical Antiquity to give the hero direct speech so as to make the ethos of a character known. From the end of the seventeenth century this technique was increasingly criticised as it was considered too difficult to determine exactly how a historical figure spoke in real life.⁵⁵

In Valentyn's reconstructed speech Pelimao indeed appears to have had good judgment (*iudicium*) in the sense that he assessed the situation and therefore knew how to reason and which words to use. It seems as though he also had good comprehension of the legal and political situation – a sign of prudence.⁵⁶ The manner in which he reasoned was moreover impressive. One of Valentyn's witnesses declared that 'he told them these things with so much frankness and force, not once, but many times, as convincingly and with as much vigour, as the best Hollander could have done' (179). Pelimao's reasoning thus had all the qualities that were needed to convince the judges of his point of view, on the basis of which they indeed almost released him. That he starved himself to death against the governor's will, must have made a sympathetic impression on the reader who was well-read in Greek history (139). Is this not reminiscent of the mythical Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus who, according to Plutarch, 'ended his life through total abstinence from food because he believed it was a governor's duty to serve the state even with his death'?⁵⁷ With his death Pelimao served what Valentyn imagined to be the Alifuru state. In Pelimao's (and

⁵⁵ Marincola J., "Speeches in Classical Historiography", in Marincola J. (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* I (Malden etc.: 2007) 118–132; Grafton A., *What was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 2007) 9–61.

⁵⁶ On *iudicium* and *prudentia*, see Jansen J., *Decorum. Observaties over de literaire gepastheid in de renaissancepoëtica* (Hilversum: 2001) 299–342.

⁵⁷ Plutarch, *Lives I*, ed. Perrin B. (London: 1914) 294–295. To the literate eighteenth-century reader this probably echoes the speech of the barbaric prince Adherbal before the senate as a loyal ally of Rome (Sallust, *Jugurtha* XIV, 14).

Valentyn's) eyes sovereignty seemed to have consisted mainly of the right to control the life and death of one's subjects. By administering his own death and thereby escaping execution by the Dutch, Pelimao up to the very last moment held on to his sovereign right. The only thing the governor was left with to do was drag Pelimao's corpse through the streets and hang it by the gallows, so as to make it seem that he did have a hand in Pelimao's death.⁵⁸

Pelimao's fate stands service to Valentyn's defence of the Ambonese. Contrary to assumptions in Dutch colonial circles, he shows his reader that there was nothing wrong with the intellectual capacities of the Ambonese. It was in fact a colonial apparatchik, Governor De Vicq, who was to blame for such ill judgment. Valentyn puts furthermore the possible deterministic aspects in his own developmental model into perspective, in which it was unclear how people could overcome their own state of underdevelopment. The barbarous mountain king Pelimao seemed to show the way. Through his behaviour he proved that he could reason with the best of Dutchmen, at the same time that the Ambonese were already more developed in their intellectual progress through regular contact with the Dutch. Valentyn hereby proves that the inhabitants of Ambon had the innate ability to become perfected and civilised. He not only discovered deficit habits and put them into perspective by comparisons with the familiar, but in Pelimao he discovered a rational man. The implication was that if this barbarous mountain king had the potential to overcome his backwardness, then certainly the Ambonese, who were one step further in terms of civilisation, could do the same. Alifuru, Ambonese and Dutch people seemed to be included in the same developmental history of mankind, but existed in different epochs, of which even the distance was measurable by comparing the 'first times' of classical Antiquity and the Ambonese with Dutch modernity in the eighteenth century. The standard was that of the Dutch, whose technological and intellectual development served as an example to the Ambonese.⁵⁹ In this developmental historiography the ethnographer occupied a superior position. He could

⁵⁸ This reading of Pelimao's death is based on Mbembe's view on the exertion of sovereignty: '[...] to kill or to allow to live constitute the limits of sovereignty, its fundamental attributes. To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power' (Mbembe A., "Necropolitics", *Public Culture* 15, 1 (2003) 10–11).

⁵⁹ See Motsch on Lafitau (Motsch, *Lafitau et l'émergence du discours ethnographique* 77–81).

envision the trajectory the natives had to cross in order to reach the time period in which the ethnographer was situated. That this trajectory could indeed be crossed was shown by the intellectual capacities of a man such as Pelimao and the progress that the Ambonese had made since their contact with the Dutch. Valentyn thus made a start with a colonial civilising project.

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ENGELBERT KAEMPFER, IMAMURA GEN'EMON
AND ARAI HAKUSEKI. AN EARLY EXCHANGE OF
KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE NETHERLANDS

Henk de Groot

Japan and the West

Following several centuries of intermittent civil war, Japan was for the first time united into a single empire at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This was largely the result of the efforts of a succession of powerful warlords, the last of which, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616), assumed the mantle of military ruler (shogun) of Japan in 1600. In doing so, he became the first of a family dynasty that was to last for well over two centuries and gave his name to one of the most prosperous and defining periods in Japanese history, the Tokugawa period (1603–1868).

By the mid-seventeenth century Japan's authorities had, by means of a series of edicts, gradually isolated Japan from the outside world, with the objective of stopping foreign interference in domestic affairs and preserve the status quo. After the Portuguese were expelled, Dutch and the Chinese traders were restricted to tiny trading posts in Nagasaki, and everyone else was forbidden to enter or leave on pain of death.

Direct contact with the Dutchmen was forbidden in all but exceptional circumstances, and the Dutch were as a rule not allowed to learn the Japanese language. Japanese authorities established an official Interpreters Guild, whose members studied the Dutch languages and acted as sole go-betweens in all transactions with the foreigners.

The purpose of all this was to protect the at that time advantageous position the Tokugawa dynasty had acquired through smart politics and brutal battles by isolating Japan from all foreign influences and thus, as it were, crystallizing the social and power structures in place at the time. And indeed, for more than two centuries a succession of Tokugawa shoguns ruled over a peaceful and prosperous Japan until in 1853 a small fleet of heavily armed American warships forced an end to Japan's isolation.

Of course, this attempt at ‘preserving the status quo’ over two centuries was only partially successful. While the Tokugawa dynasty did remain in power throughout the period of national seclusion, class structures within Japan gradually reversed themselves over time: the uninterrupted period of peace and prosperity rendered the samurai warrior class, which had been at the top, increasingly irrelevant, while the merchants, who had been placed relegated to the lowest rank, grew in power and status.

The world at large too, of course, had not remained static. In the seventeenth century the two countries that had had the most influence in Japan before its isolation, Portugal and Holland, had been powerful nations, builders of world-wide empires, but by the 1850s these countries were reduced to small and relatively insignificant entities in terms of world politics and might. More importantly, the intervening centuries had seen a move of Western the intellectual focus from literature, theology and the like, to science and technology, leading to dramatic scientific and technological advances.¹

Over the years of this period of national isolation, an awareness grew in Japan that the coarse ‘barbarian’ Dutchmen incarcerated in their small trading post in Nagasaki represented a sophisticated culture that might in fact have something to offer.² From time to time Japanese intellectuals, often under official orders, established contact with members of the Interpreters Guild with the purpose of obtaining information about Western culture and technology. The contact between Confucian scholar and shogunal advisor Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725) and Nagasaki interpreter Imamura Gen’emon (1671–1736) is the first known example of such an exchange.

*Imamura Gen’emon, Engelbert Kaemfer and the
Dutch-Japanese notebook Oranda shōi*

Imamura Gen’emon was one of the most talented and knowledgeable interpreters of the Tokugawa period, and he provided Arai with a considerable amount of information on Europe. It is now clear that

¹ Merton R.K., *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* (New York: 1970) 26.

² Blussé L. – Remmelink W. – Smits I. (eds.), *Bridging the Divide* (Leiden: 2000) 87.

Gen'emon obtained much of this information from German scholar Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716).

Imamura Gen'emon learned Dutch under circumstances that differed somewhat from the way in which interpreters traditionally received language instruction. Unlike the members of the Interpreters Guild who, once they had completed their teenage apprenticeships, were trained by their seniors within the Guild, Gen'emon had the opportunity to study directly under a European mentor for two years as an adult. Gen'emon was not from a family of hereditary interpreters, but belonged to a family of so-called *naitsūji*, or private interpreters. Private interpreters worked on a commission basis during the busy periods when there were ships in port, and did not belong to the Interpreters Guild. The son of a private interpreter often worked as a servant in a senior position for the head of the Dutch trade mission before succeeding in the position of interpreter upon the death of his father. Because of this direct contact with the Dutchmen, they were often more valued for their language skills than the official interpreter.³ Gen'emon entered into Kaempfer's service at age twenty, and stayed in this position until Kaempfer left, a year later. This connection between Kaempfer and Imamura Gen'emon was not understood until recently.⁴

Engelbert Kaempfer was a German scholar who was stationed on Dejima as resident physician to the Dutch trade mission for two years, from 1690 to 1692. In contrast to most merchants, who volunteered for a posting on Dejima because it tended to make them independently wealthy, Kaempfer came to Japan with the specific aim of learning as much about it as he could. He collected a large amount of information, which he took back to Europe, where he was awarded a doctorate on his Japanese studies at Leiden University in 1694. Kaempfer obtained much of his information from or through his 'servant' Gen'emon. In return, Kaempfer described how he himself instructed this 'clever fellow' in reading and writing as well as grammar, '...so

³ Tanaka-Van Daalen I. "The genealogies of the Japanese interpreter families working for the Dutch on Deshima (III): The Ogawa and Moriyama families", *Bulletin of the Japan-Netherlands Institute* 28, 1 (2003) 81.

⁴ For details of this discovery, see Van der Velde P. "The Interpreter Interpreted: Kaempfer's Japanese Collaborator Imamura Genemon Eisei", in Bodart-Bailey B. – D. Massarella (eds.), *The Furthest Goal – Engelbert Kaempfer's Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (Folkstone, Kent: 1995) 44–58.

that he could write the language and speak it far better than any Japanese interpreter before him'.⁵

Thus it came about that in 1695, after passing a Dutch language test with flying colours in the presence of several Dutch traders and Japanese officials, Imamura Gen'emon entered the Interpreters Guild as junior interpreter. Gen'emon went on to a brilliant and influential career of some forty years in the Interpreters Guild, during which he rose to the rank of senior interpreter, and combined this with an appointment as shogunal messenger. He features prominently in the daily diaries of the Dutch trade mission. *Dagregister* entries, a daily record of events and transactions that was kept meticulously by the Dutch traders during their two centuries of presence on Dejima, show that in later life he was affectionately referred to by the Dutch as 'Father Gennemon'.

The private Seikadō collection near Tokyo holds a Dutch–Japanese notebook that identifies Kaempfer as the source of some of the information it contains. The work, entitled *Oranda shōi* ('Dutch Words and their Meanings'), is anonymous and undated. However, only Gen'emon spent any time systematically studying under Kaempfer, and it seems safe to assume that he provided at least some (and probably all) of the information contained in it. Although undated, the inclusion in the work of the term *metsuke* ('inspector', or 'spy'), a new rank of interpreter that was established in 1695, places the manuscript post-1695, in other words, at least four years after Kaempfer's departure from Japan.

Oranda shōi has already been described in some detail by Katagiri but a number of aspects are worth noting here.⁶ The work lists in both Dutch and Japanese a number of functions within the ranks of the Dutch traders themselves, such as 'senior merchant', 'accountant', 'carpenter', followed by a similar list for the ranks held by the Japanese that were likely to emerge during dealings with the Dutch, such as the various official functionaries of the city of Nagasaki, and of course the ranks of the interpreters. Although many of these words had been used in both languages in and around Nagasaki for half a century, it

⁵ Bodart Bailey B.M., *Kaempfer's Japan* (Honolulu: 1999) 28.

⁶ Katagiri K., "Kenperu, Imamura Gen'emon Eisei no shin'yakugo kyōgi, kettei", *Yōgakushi kenkyū Journal of the History of Western Learning* 13 (1996) 55–66; Merton, *Science, Technology and Society*.

has been suggested that some translations were probably coined by the partnership of Gen'emon and Kaempfer.⁷

Oranda shōi, however, is much more than a mere word list. It also presents descriptions of European terms and names within historical or religious contexts. The Dutch word *keizer* ('emperor') is followed by a brief description of how Julius Caesar, after uniting a number of European countries, devised the term 'caesar' in order to place himself above the kings of the territories he had conquered. Mention is made of the fact that Johan Hübner (1668–1731), author of a geographical treatise called *Algemeene Geographie of beschryving des geheelen aardrijks* ('General Geography, or Complete Description of the Earth', Amsterdam: 1769), described Japan as a 'groot keizerrijk' ('great empire'). A distinction is made between the *geestelijke erfkeizer* ('hereditary spiritual emperor'), translated here as *mikado* ('emperor'), and the *wereldlijke keizer* ('secular emperor'), indicating the shogun, giving us an indication of Dutch understanding at the time of the respective roles of the emperor and the shogun.

Given the attitude of the Japanese authorities towards Christianity at the time, the detailed information the document provides about religious concepts and biblical events is surprising. There is an explanation about the difference between Christians and Jews; mention is made of Moses, the Ten Commandments and Mohammed; and Socrates is likened to Confucius. This last comparison also appears in Kaempfer's writing, and links him unmistakably to the material presented in this work.⁸ Of interest is also the morsel of Protestant propaganda embedded in the explanation given for the Dutch word *heiden* ('heathen'): *zō o tatematsuru* ('erecting and worshipping images'). Although nowhere in the work is there any reference to the New Testament, and therefore specifically Christian information is absent, the author nevertheless took a considerable risk in committing this kind of information to paper. Thus, although *Oranda shōi* is essentially designed as a vocabulary list, its contents leave us with little doubt that many entries were the result of exchanges between Kaempfer and Imamura Gen'emon, and provide us with some revealing insights into the kind of information that was traded.

⁷ Katagiri, "Kenperu, Imamura Gen'emon" 56.

⁸ Bodart-Bailey, *Kaempfer's Japan* 109 and 130.

From Imamura Gen'emon to Arai Hakuseki

Some time after Kaempfer's departure from Japan, Imamura Gen'emon got the opportunity to pass his knowledge about Europe on to Confucianist scholar Arai Hakuseki, who occupies a central role in Japanese history. He was a prominent intellectual, who held a powerful political position during the reign of two shoguns. In addition, he was a talented and to this day influential historian.

In 1708 a Portuguese ship secretly dropped an Italian missionary called Giovanni Batista Sidotti on a small island near Kyushu. Following his capture, Gen'emon, who knew some Portuguese, was summoned to question him, but communication difficulties soon prompted the Japanese to call in the help of the Dutch on Dejima. The latter understandably felt reluctant to get involved in any dealings between the Japanese and a captive 'papist', but eventually offered the services of senior merchant Adriaan Douw, whose knowledge of Latin greatly improved the flow of information. Some apprentice interpreters were subsequently sent to Dejima for instruction in Latin in 1708 and 1710, but the Dutch again showed little enthusiasm for this, and although Latin does feature prominently in the work of one of the first Edo-period scholars to take an interest in Western writing systems, Kitajima Kenshin, the interpreters' Latin classes did not otherwise lead to the acquisition of any useful skills.⁹

Reports on these interrogations eventually attracted the attention of Arai Hakuseki, who received permission to have Sidotti moved to Edo for further questioning. It was during these sessions that Hakuseki made the acquaintance of Imamura Gen'emon, who had escorted Sidotti to Edo. Communication between the missionary and the Japanese cannot have flowed easily without the benefit of Douw's Latin, but Gen'emon and two apprentice interpreters, presumably with the aid of a Latin dictionary, still managed to help Hakuseki extract a considerable amount of information from the Italian.

⁹ Katagiri K., *Imamura Gen'eimon Eisei* (Tokyo: 1995) 114 conjectures that Douw was not allowed to go to Edo during the Court Journey of 1709 so that he could continue teaching the interpreters Latin. However, a memo from *opperhoofd* Jasper van Mansdale to Douw prior to departure makes it clear that Douw was required to stay behind to assist with possible further interrogations of Sidotti. See also Van der Velde P. – Bachofner R., *The Deshima Diaries Marginalia 1700–1740* (Tokyo: 1992) 108.

It seems likely that it was the meetings with Gen'emon that eventually whetted Hakuseki's curiosity with regard to Dutch matters. Hakuseki subsequently met with the Dutch merchants on four occasions during their court journeys to Edo, and wrote several works reporting what he had learned about Europe, including some surprisingly candid information about Christianity.¹⁰

Similarities in the information contained in Gen'emon's *Oranda shōi* (discussed above) and Hakuseki's subsequent writings on Europe suggest that Gen'emon supplemented the information obtained from Sidotti and the Dutch traders with the knowledge he himself had acquired during his years in the service of Kaempfer. Katagiri notes that several parts of Hakuseki's *Gaikoku no jichōsho* ('A Record of Foreign Matters'), a series of seven manuscripts which Hakuseki produced progressively between the years 1712–1716, particularly the word lists, are written in two different styles, and suggests that these may be the respective hands of Hakuseki and Gen'emon.¹¹ It appears that in most cases Hakuseki entered Japanese words or phrases, and then had Gen'emon add foreign renditions underneath. The inclusion of phrases that bear no relationship to the daily activities of the Nagasaki interpreters is a further indication of this.

However, while Gen'emon appears to have been happy to assist Hakuseki in his research regarding European history, geography, politics, customs, and even religion, he was considerably more reticent when it came to his linguistic skills. The 570 'foreign' words in *Gaikoku no jichōsho* are a mixture of Dutch, Portuguese and Latin, without any indication as to which word is in which language. One section of the work deals with Dutch pronunciation, but since this is done entirely in *katakana* and without the use of Dutch examples, the exercise is largely academic, and meaningless in a practical sense.

Hakuseki believed the various European languages to be no more than dialects based on one European language, stating that it would be 'simpler for a Dutch interpreter to understand Italian than for a Nagasaki man to speak to one from Oshu'.¹² He was not alone in this belief, and this view persisted in some circles until the end of the Edo period. Although Gen'emon knew Portuguese and at least some

¹⁰ Goodman G.K., *Japan and the Dutch 1600–1853* (Richmond, Surrey: 2000) 47.

¹¹ Katagiri, *Imamura Gen'emon* 152.

¹² Sugimoto T., *Rangogaku no seiritsu to sono tenkai II, Rangakusha ni yoru rango no gakushū to sono kenkyū* (Tokyo: 1977) 16.

German and Latin, and therefore must have known better, he appears to have made no attempt to dissuade Hakuseki from this somewhat optimistic evaluation.

It is likely that the solution to Gen'emon's reticence when it came to linguistic skills lies in his loyalty towards the Interpreters Guild. Whereas generally speaking the more talented among the interpreters tended to leave the Guild at an early stage in order to pursue a career in medicine or translation, Gen'emon did no such thing, and was still on active service in the Guild when he died at age 65. Variousy described in the *Dagregister* as a 'sly old fox'¹³ and a paragon of virtue, he clearly took his duties very seriously, and showed himself to be both a consummate politician and conscientious public servant. He was therefore not only bound by, but most likely quite convinced of, the merits of the Guild's policy of secrecy regarding its professional skills.

Arai Hakuseki never met Engelbert Kaempfer, but it is clear that the latter's ideas and knowledge are reflected in Hakuseki's work, thanks to the work of their talented go-between Imamura Gen'emon. It has been suggested that Hakuseki's work, and by extension Gen'emon's contributions, played a decisive part in arousing the curiosity of the new shogun Yoshimune (regnat 1716–1745) for European knowledge, leading to a relaxation of the ban on the importation of Western books and opening the way for later scholars such as Aoki Kon'yō (1698–1769) and Noro Genjō (1693–1761) to pursue Western studies with official encouragement.¹⁴

As has been noted above, the identity of Kaempfer's assistant, Imamura Gen'emon, was not realised until relatively recently. On the strength of this discovery, the present study represents the first attempt to draw a connection between Kaempfer and Hakuseki, and more work needs to be done. Somewhat to this researcher's surprise, no complete English translation of Arai Hakuseki's *Seiyō kibun* (Hakuseki's study of the West based on his meetings with Sidotti) has ever been made.

¹³ 'dien ouden loosaart Gennemon [...]'. Van der Velde P. – Bachofner R., *The Deshima Diaries Marginalia 1700–1740* (Tokyo: 1992) 387.

¹⁴ Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch* 47.

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WITSEN'S STUDIES OF INNER EURASIA

Bruno Naarden

In the seventeenth century an important part of the European discourse on Asia became directly dependent on the Dutch VOC. One can quickly get an impression of the already imposing depth and scope of the knowledge acquired about that continent, and the prominent role the Dutch played in that process, by perusing the volumes of *Asia in the making of Europe*. But European interest in Asia was selective. In the thousands of pages of Donald Lach's classical study one will find surprisingly little about Siberia, Mongolia and Central Asia which together form the bulk of the Asian landmass.¹ It is also obvious that the gathering of information by the VOC was to a very large extent restricted to the rich, densely populated, sedentary, agrarian and already significantly urbanized societies of the Asian periphery.

Without question the opulent lands of the Asian rim were far more attractive for a Western commercial company than the harsh, barren plains of Inner Asia. The latter could not be reached by ship and seemed almost only inhabited by not very numerous, but reputedly poor and aggressive nomads. Their main trading item, the warhorse, was highly desired by the rulers of China, India or Persia, but certainly not by Dutch merchants in Asia. It therefore comes as a surprise that Nicolaas Witsen (1641–1717), one of the directors of the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC at the end of the seventeenth century, was most probably the greatest connoisseur of the whole area of Inner Eurasia in the Early Modern Era.²

In his twenties Witsen had visited Muscovy, but he never went to Asia. He carefully studied the existing literature on the subject, while his pivotal role in political and commercial circles of Holland enabled

¹ Only in vol. III of *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Book IV, written by D.F. Lach and E.J. Van Kley, Inner Asia, East Siberia and Tibet are rather superficially discussed in a chapter on the periphery of China.

² For the terms 'Inner Eurasia' and 'Outer Asia' see for instance: Christian D., "Inner Eurasia as a Unit in World History", *Journal of World History* 5, 2 (1994) 173–211, and Christian D., *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, vol. I: *Inner Eurasia from Prehistory to the Mongol Empire* (Oxford: 1998) xv–xxiii.



Fig. 1. Petrus Schenck, *Nicolaas Witsen at the age of sixty*, 1701, mezzotint. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet.

him to build a huge network of informants in Europe, Muscovy and Asia which provided him with an enormous amount of contemporary materials. In 1691 he stunned the English Royal Society with the first large (115 by 125 centimeters) map of the 'Northern and Eastern part of Europe and Asia' which he had more or less completed four years earlier. This map covered almost the whole area of Inner Eurasia³ which in Witsen's time was known under the name of *Tartaria* or *Tartary*, the lands where the *Tartars*, the nomadic peoples, lived. Especially remarkable was his detailed rendering of Siberia, only recently conquered by the Russians and still almost completely unknown in the West.

In 1692 he produced *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (*North and East Tartary*), a book of 660 pages which served as a companion to the map. A second, heavily revised and enlarged edition of this work in two folio volumes and a total of thousand pages was printed in 1705. Despite the book's title, Witsen had not limited himself to the North and East of Inner Eurasia. In fact his book embraced an even larger area than his map, because next to Siberia, Mongolia and Central Asia it also depicted Manchuria, the Islands to the North of Japanese Honshu, Korea, as well as Persia, the Crimea, the Caucasus, the lower and middle Volga-region and the Ural-mountains. Witsen offered far more than a purely geographical description of these parts of the earth. His text also dealt with fauna, flora, minerals and antiquities. If the term had existed around 1700 Witsen could rightfully have been called the greatest 'nomadist' of his time because his book contained an amazing amount of details about hundreds of peoples, their history, customs and languages.

Witsen's Wobbly Place in History and the Strange Fortunes of North and East Tartary

In the second half of this article we will discuss how Witsen used his VOC-connections to obtain information about Tartary, but first we have to deal with the unhappy fate of his work, which until now has

³ It is indeed remarkable that the boundaries of Witsen's map coincide pretty closely with those of Inner Eurasia on maps designed two or three centuries later by Christian and his predecessors like Mackinder, Teggart or Sinor.



Fig. 2. Romeyn de Hooghe, Title page of N. Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye*, etching (2nd ed.; Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705).



Fig. 3. Anonymous, *A Tungusian [Evenk] burial place on which a dead horse is placed, and some old dilapidated Tatarian homes and strongholds*. Engraving from N. Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (2nd ed.; Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705). In fact only the skin and not the whole corpse of a horse was placed on a stake as a blood sacrifice.

not been properly understood or appreciated. Witsen was forgotten or not recognized as the great pioneer of Inner Eurasian studies. The main reason can be traced to Inner Eurasia remaining for such a long time a neglected field of study and this was to a considerable degree due to the lack of interest of organizations like the VOC for the largest part of Asia. This myopic view of Asia did not disappear after the eclipse of the trading companies in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but became an entrenched tradition. Most modern European historians who studied Asia continued to be preoccupied with their own colonies and after 1945 with their own colonial heritage. In general their focus stayed firmly fixed on Outer Asia. The few great scholars who had always defended the idea of the centrality and relevance

of Inner Eurasia, however, like René Grousset (1885–1952), Owen Lattimore (1890–1989), André Gunder Frank (1929–2005) or Denis Sinor, never referred to Witsen as an interesting predecessor. He was simply unknown to them.⁴

Witsen himself is also to blame for this. Rather than an academic scholar, he was an extremely rich Amsterdam grandee who during most of his active life was overburdened with political duties. His studies were an important hobby, but he was more a collector of data than an argumentative intellectual. His big books were no easy reads. The fact that they were hardly available to the scholarly community formed an even greater problem. His map of *Tartary* as well as the first (1692) and the second (1705) edition of *North and East Tartary* were printed, but never reached the bookshops. Witsen continued to improve and correct his work. He was an ambitious, but also a very prudent person. Geography was not a harmless academic activity. Knowledge of remote parts of the world needed to be confined among the well guarded secrets of trading companies like the VOC or a state like Russia. Witsen's friendship with tsar Peter I had facilitated his extensive investigations of Siberia, but this also meant that he had to be concerned about the opinion of this cruel and impatient despot to whom he had wisely devoted his map and book. At the same time he wanted to prevent that other scholars would purloin and publish under their own name the results of his research which had cost him so much time and money. Bad health and old age thwarted his efforts to finish his work. Until his death Witsen kept the printed pages of his book at home and only a few copies were now and then handed out to friends or reliable scholars.⁵

When he died in 1717 he was remembered in the Netherlands as the learned mayor of Amsterdam, who had been in touch with King William III, the Duke of Marlborough, the King of Prussia and Peter

⁴ In vol. III of Lach – Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, however, Witsen is mentioned several times. On p. 1759 *North and East Tartary* is aptly described as 'chaotically organized', but also quite inadequately characterized as a book 'about North East Asia' which 'contains little new, first hand information.'

⁵ For more details about Witsen's political and scholarly life, see: Gebhard J.F., *Het leven van Mr. Nicolaas Cornelisz. Witsen* (Utrecht: 1881–1882); Wladimiroff I., *De kaart van een verzwegen vriendschap. Nicolaes Witsen en Andrej Winus en de Nederlandse cartografie van Rusland* (Groningen: 2008); Peters M., *De wijze koopman. Het wereldwijde onderzoek van Nicolaes Witsen (1641–1717), burgemeester en VOC-bevindhebber van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 2010).

the Great of Russia. Abroad he was known as an expert on Russian and Asian matters, but since his work remained unpublished he had done little to achieve lasting fame. No wonder the German classicist and orientalist Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer, who later would become the founder of Chinese studies in Russia, wrote in 1720 to La Croze, the librarian of the Prussian king: 'Did the Amsterdam politician Witsen not write a book about Tartarian matters? By whom is it published? In what language?'⁶

Already in 1730 Witsen's inaccessible legacy got formidable competition from Philip Johann Tabbert von Strahlenberg's map of *Tartaria magna* and his book about this topic which was easily obtainable and would soon be translated into Swedish, English, French and Spanish. During the Great Northern War the German Strahlenberg had been an officer in Swedish service. He was taken prisoner by the Russians and sent to Siberia where he stayed many years. His book was primarily based on personal experience and research, and therefore much more readable than Witsen's work, which was three times as voluminous. Strahlenberg praised his own map as much less expensive, and far more accurate, up to date, compact and informative than Witsen's of 1687 and he suggested that Peter the Great had forbidden the publication of *North and East Tartary*.⁷

Strahlenberg's efforts to drive Witsen into obscurity did not succeed completely. Gerhard Friedrich Müller, a German scholar at the Russian Academy of Sciences, participated in the Great Northern Expedition, Vitus Bering's second trip to Kamchatka in 1733. To prepare himself for that adventure Müller had diligently studied Witsen's map and both editions of *North and East Tartary* which were kept in the

⁶ See *Thesaurus Epistolici Lacroziani* (Tomus I, 1742) 45. In a German book about Siberia of 1725 the author also complained that the only thorough and competent study about Siberia was written by Witsen, but he could not find it and doubted that it was ever printed. See: *Der allerneueste Staat von Siberien, einer grossen und zu vor wenig bekannten Moskovitischen Provinz in Asien* (Nürnberg: 1725), "Vorrede", 2.

⁷ See Von Strahlenberg P.J., *Das Nord und Ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia* (Stockholm: 1730) "Vorrede", i, xiii–xiv. Twenty years later Von Strahlenberg's incorrect statement about the suppression of *North and East Tartary* was the only information one could find about Witsen in the *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon* (Leipzig: 1750–1751), the well known reference work by Chr.G. Jöcher (see tome IV 2029). The English journalist and scholar John F. Baddeley was the first to make a serious comparison between the maps of Witsen and Strahlenberg. He concluded: 'We can hardly fail to give the palm to the illustrious Dutchman rather than to his Swedish detractor, whose blunders are at least as great and less excusable.' Baddeley J.F., *Russia Mongolia and China* (London: 1919) vol. I, cli.

library of the Academy in Petersburg. Just before he left the capital for Siberia he wrote an informative article of 25 pages about Witsen's work which appeared in the German journal on Russian history that Müller had founded a year earlier.⁸ Müller praised Witsen highly, but he was amazed that the Dutchman did not mention his main informant in Moscow, Andrei Winius, 'whose help had been essential for the collection of such a mass of material on Siberia.'⁹ He also regretted that Witsen had not normally published the results of his research because in that case 'the history and geography of Siberia would have been brightened by a great light considerably earlier.' To help readers to find their way in Witsen's rather chaotically composed book he also published an index of fifty pages to both editions of *North and East Tartary*.¹⁰

Müller would repeatedly refer to Witsen's work in his fundamental *History of Siberia* which was written after the return of the Great Northern Expedition.¹¹ Other eighteenth century specialists on Siberia like Messerschmidt, Bering and Tatishchev also used Witsen's work.¹² Because of Müller's German journal, Witsen also remained a source for a number of scholars outside Russia like Samuel Engels¹³ or the prominent linguist Johann Christoph von Adelung.¹⁴ Johann Christoph's even more illustrious nephew Friedrich von Adelung (1768–1843) became president of the Russian academy of sciences and

⁸ Müller G.F., "Nachricht von einem raren Wercke betitult: Noord-Oost Tartarye durch Nicolaes Witsen", *Sammlung Russischer Geschichte*, Bd. I, Drittes Stück (St.Petersburg: 1733) 196–221.

⁹ Winius was postmaster of Russia, head of the Siberian chancellery and also a relative of Witsen. The curious relationship between these two men is the subject of Wladimiroff's dissertation, *De kaart van een verzweegen vriendschap*.

¹⁰ Müller G.F., "Register über Nicolaes Witsens Noord- und Oost-Tartarey erster und andrer Edition" in: *Sammlung Russischer Geschichte*, Bd. I, Drittes Stück (Petersburg: 1733) 222–272.

¹¹ For a recent Russian re-edition of this work see: Миллер Г.Ф., *История Сибири* (Moscow: 1999).

¹² See: Fisher R., *Bering's Voyages. Whither and Why* (Seattle, London: 1977) 77, and Grau C., *Der Wirtschaftsorganisator, Staatsmann und Wissenschaftler Vasilij N. Tatiščev, 1686–1750* (Berlin: 1963) 123, 174–177, 208.

¹³ Engels S., *Geographische und kritische Nachrichten und Anmerkungen über die Lage der Nordlichen Gegenden von Asien und Amerika* (Mitau, Leipzig: 1772) 30.

¹⁴ Adelung J.C., *Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachenkunde mit dem Vater Unser als Sprachprobe* (Berlin: 1806) 473–549.

reviewed all Witsen's maps on Asia.¹⁵ According to him *North and East Tartary* was 'even to-day still important and instructive for Russia'.¹⁶

Thanks to people like Müller and Adelung, Witsen remained an important source for Russian geographers and historians of Siberia.¹⁷ At the end of the nineteenth century the ethnologist Pypin considered the 'famous, but rather unknown' book of Witsen to be 'the most remarkable work' about Asiatic Russia written by a foreigner and even in the soviet period a great scholar like Alekseev still remarked that Witsen had opened 'a completely new era' in the study of Siberia.¹⁸ Nowadays Witsen is mentioned on quite a number of Russian historical websites as the first who reported in printed form on certain towns, nationalities, languages, excavated antiquities or the discovery of minerals.¹⁹ Nevertheless, very few Russians have ever seen or read

¹⁵ Adelung F., "Über die ältern ausländischen Karten von Russland", *Beiträge zur Kenntniss des Russischen Reichs und der angränzenden Länder Asiens*, Bd. IV (Petersburg: 1841) 40–45.

¹⁶ Adelung F., *Kritisch-literarische Übersicht der Reisenden in Russland bis 1700 deren Berichte bekannt sind* (St. Petersburg: 1846) Band I, 32, Band II, 338–339.

¹⁷ In the late nineteenth century P.A. Bezsonov used Witsen for his studies of the Croatian monk Juraj Križanić who as an expert on Siberia had also been a source for Witsen. See: Jagić V., *Život i rad Jurja Križanića* (Zagreb: 1917) 201–205; Eckman Th. – Kadić A. (eds.), *Juraj Križanić (1618–1683) Russophile and Ecumenic visionary* (The Hague: 1976) 253 en 315. The ethnographer Leopold Schrenk, the first modern Russian scholar to do research in the recently conquered Amur area, also consulted Witsen who had been the first to describe this region. See Schrenck L. von, *Reisen und Forschungen im Amur Lande in den Jahren 1854–1855* (Band III. Erste Lieferung. St. Petersburg: 1882) 95ff., and Шренк Л., *Об инородцах Амурского Края* (St. Petersburg: 1883) 97ff. I. Tyzhnov translated and discussed a number of pages of *North and East Tartary* in an article about the beginning of the conquest of Siberia. See Тыжнов И., "Обзор иностранных известий о Сибири 2-й половины XVI века", *Сибирский Сборник* (St. Petersburg: 1887) 128–133. Pages about Scythian antiquities and pre-historic drawings on Siberian rocks were translated by the German-Russian orientalist F.W. Radloff. See: Radloff F.W., *Antiquités Sibériennes. Matériaux pour servir à l'archéologie de la Russie* (Part I, Livraison I; St. Petersburg: 1888) 3–5; В. Радлов, *Сибирские древности. Материалы по археологии России* (Part I, edition II, St. Petersburg: 1891) 24–50.

¹⁸ See Пыпин А.Н., *История Русской Этнографии* (*History of Russian Ethnography*, Part IV, St. Petersburg: 1892) 213, and Алексеев М.П., *Сибирь в известиях Западно-Европейских путешественников и писателей* (*Siberia in the reports of West-European Travellers and Writers*, Irkutsk: 1932) xii, xiv.

¹⁹ I give three examples, but there are many more:

- a) http://www.gubkin.ru/faculty/humanities/chairs_and_departments/world_culture_history : 'The first information on the Khanty and Mansi [Finugrian peoples in West Siberia] is found in the notes of the Dutchman N.Witsen.'
- b) <http://diaghilev.perm.ru/confrence/s8/newspage5.htm> : 'The first reports on metal art objects from the Ural area and Siberia we can read in the book *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (1692) by the Amsterdam mayor Witsen.'

his book. *North and East Tartary* is a bibliographical rarity written in seventeenth century Dutch and only available in one or two Russian libraries. Because they could not consult a complete Russian translation of the book, they never made a thorough and comprehensive analysis of its content.²⁰ Inner Eurasia was much studied in Russia because it formed the largest part of the tsarist and Soviet empire, but Witsen's significance as a trailblazer in this enormous field was hardly noticed.²¹

For scholars outside Russia it was even more difficult to recognize Witsen's importance as an early specialist of Inner Eurasia.²² This was

c) <http://www.manus.baikal.ru> : *Irkutsk city historiography*. "Thus the first printed publications about Irkutsk appeared in the foreign press. In the fundamental work of an Amsterdam mayor Nikolai Witsen "Northern and Eastern Tatar-ia" (1692) a page was devoted to a recently founded Irkutsk."

²⁰ However, the famous historical geographer B.P. Polevoi intensively studied the information in *North and East Tartary* about East Siberia and the Far East. See for instance: 'Николай Витсен о близости Америки к Азии и этнических связях между ними' ('Nicolai Witsen on the nearness of America and Asia and ethnic contacts between both continents'), *Наука и техника* (1971, Выпуск 6) 120–122; 'О картах Северной Азии Н.К.Витсена' ('About the maps of Northern Asia of N.C.Witsen'), *Изв. АН СССР, Сер. геогр.* (1973, № 2) 124–133; 'Документальное подтверждение гипотезы М.П.Алексеева: (О русском источнике сообщ. Н.Витсена, опубли. в 1974 г. в трудах Лондонского королевского общества)' ('Documentary affirmation of the hypothesis of M.P. Alekseev (On a Russian source in the works of N.Witsen, published in 1974 in the journal of the London Royal Society)'), *Сравнительное Изучение Литература* (Leningrad: 1976) 76–81; "Dutch Traces in the Cartography of the North Pacific in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (In commemoration of the 350th Anniversary of Maarten Gerritsz. Vries Expedition)", XV International Conference on the History of Cartography (Chicago: 1993) 23 ff. Witsen is also repeatedly referred to in Polevoi's *Новое ов открытии Камчатки* (*News about the Discovery of Kamchatka*, Petropavlovsk: 1997) part I, pp. 103–106, 114, 115, part II, 24, 68, 77, 86, 107, 119.

The former director of the liquidated Georgian Museum in Moscow, D.L. Vateishvili, devoted almost 300 pages to Witsen's description of Georgia. See Ватейшвили Д. Л., *Грузия и Европейские страны* (*Georgia and the European countries*, Moscow: 2003) part I, Book II, 278–569.

Both scholars profited from the help of Mrs. W. Triesman in Petersburg who had translated *North and East Tartary* into modern Russian. This translation, made between 1945 and 1950, was never published and remained in handwriting until the start of the Witsen project led by the author of this article. In this project Dutch and Russian scholars cooperated to produce an annotated Russian version of *North and East Tartary* which will be published in 2010.

²¹ Even the great Wilhelm Barthold (1869–1930), the Russian 'Gibbon of Turkestan', only said that Witsen 'se servit des renseignements russes sur la Sibérie' and was not impressed by the part of his map that represented Central Asia. Barthold V.V., *La découverte de l'Asie. Histoire de l'orientalisme en Europe et en Russie* (Paris: 1947) 222.

²² The German Georg Henning, *Die Reiseberichte über Sibirien. Von Herberstein bis Ides*. (Leipzig : 1906), and the Frenchman Gaston Cahen, *Les Cartes de la Sibérie au XVIII^e siècle*. (Paris: 1911) paid much attention to Witsen but only as an expert of Siberia. Baddeley

also true for the Netherlands. The most important Dutch historian of the eighteenth century, Jan Wagenaar, rendered Witsen as a politician, but did not mention his relations with Russia or his work on Tartary. The Dutch left it to Voltaire to immortalize Witsen as the learned host of Peter the Great during the tsar's stay in Amsterdam in 1697–98.²³ Inspired by Voltaire, whom he had met in Holland, the Frisian nobleman and Dutch poet Onno Zwier van Haren started to glorify Witsen in a fiercely nationalistic verse in 1785.²⁴

In the same year copies of *North and East Tartary* appeared for regular sale on the market for the first time and were offered to all 'science loving patriots'. The publication of this third edition was to some degree rooted in the new, nationalistic spirit of the late eighteenth century,²⁵ but also in continuing interest abroad for Witsen's work.²⁶ Patriotism was also a driving force for Jacobus Scheltema. His four volumes on Dutch-Russian relations tried to prove that the little Holland of the seventeenth century had been the cradle of Russia's present greatness. He paid much attention to Witsen in his research, but was nevertheless of the opinion that 'a solid and comprehensive biography of this

(*Russia Mongolia and China*) perhaps rightly fathomed Witsen's significance as an author on Inner Eurasia, but he was an exception. The recent study of Valerie Kivelson on maps of Russia in the seventeenth century *Cartographies of Tsardom* (Ithaca, London: 2006) does not mention Witsen.

²³ In his *Histoire de l'Empire de Russie sur Pierre le Grand* which appeared between 1759 and 1763 and reached many European readers, Voltaire wrote: 'Peter received lessons in physics at the home of the mayor Witsen, a citizen who should be praised forever because of his patriotism and for the use of his immense wealth which made him into a real cosmopolitan, since he spent large amounts by sending able people in a quest for what was most rare in all parts of the universe and chartered ships at his own costs to discover new territories.'

²⁴ Zwier van Haren O., *De Geuzen, Vaderlandsch Dichtstuk*, deel I (Amsterdam: 1785) 73–75.

²⁵ In 1788 the Dutch physicist Jean Henri van Swinden presented in a speech three learned Dutch statesmen as shining examples to the nation: Witsen, his nephew Hudde and Johan de Wit. See: Van Swinden J.H., *Redevoering en Aenspraak ter inwijding van Felix Meritis* (Amsterdam: 1789) 64–69. The rich aristocrat and bibliophile Johan Meerman wrote about Witsen in the same vein in his *Discours sur le Premier Voyage de Pierre le Grand par Mr. J. de Meerman. Comte l'Empire et Sénateur* (Paris: 1812) 65–69.

²⁶ The German explorer Johann Reinhold Forster, who had used *North and East Tartary* for his own studies, noted that the university of Halle (where he lectured) had bought a copy of the 'very rare, but excellent' work of the Amsterdam mayor for 80 Reichstaler from Petersburg. In 1784 he was pleased to announce to the international scholarly community that a new edition was in preparation in Amsterdam. See: Forster J.R., *Geschichte der Entdeckungen und Schiffahrten im Norden* (Frankfurt an der Oder: 1784) 196. The edition of 1785 used the printed text of the second edition, but added a number of illustrations and a new introduction.

famous Dutchman would be a valuable present for every friend of virtue, of scholarship and of our country'.²⁷

But, when in the nineteenth century more material about Witsen was published, his stature as a statesman was challenged. A full scale political biography written by J.F.Gebhard confirmed the view of Witsen as a rather mediocre administrator, but neglected his scholarly merits.²⁸ Although C. Busken Huet and M. Greshoff did their best to boost Witsen's reputation,²⁹ he seemed to have definitely lost his position as a key figure of the Golden Age and hardly anybody in the Netherlands showed any interest in his studies of Tartary. Recently, however, Witsen has received more and more attention. He became known as the author of a vivid travel diary and report about Muscovy.³⁰ For the first time his book on shipbuilding, his scholarly networks, his Russian connections and his achievements as a collector, cartographer and VOC-manager were investigated in depth.³¹ As a result Witsen was restored as a very interesting historical person, but the more the versatility and the global scope of his scholarly interests were elucidated, the more his unique position as the first great student of Inner Eurasia disappeared into the background.³²

²⁷ Scheltema J., *Staatkundig Nederland*. II (Amsterdam: 1806) 505–508. See also Scheltema's *Rusland en de Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: 1817–1819) and his *Geschied- en Letterkundig Mengelwerk* (III, Utrecht: 1823) 131–170.

²⁸ See note 5.

²⁹ Busken Huet C., *Het land van Rembrandt* (reprint Amsterdam: 1987) 711–712, 942–943; Greshoff M., "Nicolaas Witsen als Maecenas", *Album der Natuur* (Haarlem: 1909) 125–53.

³⁰ Witsen's *Moscovische reyse* (*Muscovian journey*) was edited by T.J.G. Locher and P. de Buck, and published by the Linschoten Vereniging in 1966. The travel diary was translated in 1981 by W. Triesman into Russian and published in Petersburg in 1996.

³¹ See a.o.: Bergvelt E.S. – Kistemaker R.E. (eds.), *De wereld binnen handbereik* (Zwolle: 1992); Hoving A.J., *Nicolaas Witsen's Scheeps-bouw-konst Open gestelt* (Francker: 1994); Jorink E., *Het boek der Natuere* (Leiden: 2006) 337–48 and the extensive and very useful research of Vladimiroff, *De kaart van een verzweegen vriendschap*, and Peters *De wijze koopman*.

³² Witsen spent his whole life to collect information 'about societies overseas' according to Blussé L. and Ooms I., *Kennis en Compagnie* (Leiden: 2002) 7. He did, however, exactly the opposite: he gathered data about the *landlocked* societies of Inner Eurasia. *North and East Tartary* is also still thought to be a book on Russia. See: Zandvliet K., *De 250 rijksten van de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: 2006) 39.

Vladimiroff, *De kaart van een verzweegen vriendschap* 1, writes that Witsen's map mainly reproduced 'that part of the Russian empire which in those times was called Tartary and is now named Siberia.' On his map, however, Witsen used the name SIBERIA (in big letters), but only for the region to the West of the river Lena, in other words for what we now call West-Siberia. 'Tartary' was for him and his contemporaries the

North and East Tartary *and the VOC*

Witsen was well known for his private collection of rare objects from all over the globe, but the huge amount of papers he had acquired about Inner Eurasia could of course not be displayed as museological items in his home. To be of some public use they had to be edited and published. Witsen had no wish to express his own thoughts about Tartary in the form of a logically argued discourse based on a personal interpretation of his sources. Although an avid collector, he was not a gifted writer, and *North and East Tartary* was conceived as a cabinet of curiosities in printed form. Although Witsen tried to group the intelligence about particular areas in separate chapters, his book remained a big warehouse crammed with reports of very different length and quality. Because of this *North and East Tartary* is a difficult book to consult, but also a surprisingly rich *Fundgrube*. It contains many unexpected pearls of information, which a more professional and strict editor might have left out, because they would have disrupted the order of the text.

Even if one takes the trouble to read all the 736,406 words of *North and East Tartary*, it is not easy to identify the roughly 2400 different persons or the 9500 different geographical items mentioned in it, because the spelling of their names shows the most fantastic varieties. The identification of sources is even more troublesome.³³ As Müller already noted, Witsen sometimes protected his sources by not mentioning them at all. He also very often vaguely described them as 'a Russian merchant from Tobolsk', 'a certain Arabian writer', 'a German physician' and the like. Because he used some sources repeatedly in different chapters it is difficult to estimate their total number, but between 700 and 800 seems a good guess.³⁴

name of a far larger part of Asia (and also of Eastern Europe). His map and book therefore covered huge areas that had not yet been conquered by the Russian or Chinese empires.

In Peters's dissertation (see for instance *De wijze koopman* 219) *North and East Tartary* is often quoted, but the author gives no adequate analysis or characterization of the book in its totality and obviously also has no idea what the term *Tartary* meant in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period.

³³ In the framework of the Witsen project an index of geographical names was compiled by Drs. D. Balakaeva. A list of personal names and a list of sources was made by Dr. J.H. Jager.

³⁴ I counted 25 different sources in the first chapter, 19 in the second, 80 in the third and 80 in the fourth. These four chapters comprise the first 208 pages. The total

In about 350 cases the names of his informants are given or can easily be identified. About 220 are Early Modern and of European origin. In this category only 24 are directly connected with the VOC, while 31 are Catholic, mostly Jesuit sources. The VOC is mentioned as an organization on 36 pages, less frequent than contemporary Mongol chiefs – with whom the VOC had no contacts at all – like Galdan (on 44 pages) or Tushiyetu-khan³⁵ (on 54 pages). If we also include anonymous sources like ‘a letter from Batavia’ or ‘a report from a gentleman who lived for a long time in Hoksieu [Foochow, China]’ 17% of his data might be of VOC-origin in the first four chapters,³⁶ but in the parts about Siberia this percentage is of course almost zero.

Such figures corroborate the supposition that the VOC provided Witsen with only a rather small portion of the information he needed about Inner Eurasia. Nevertheless, the company was an essential element of his information network and Witsen must have thought that his scientific hobby was of vital importance for the VOC. In many ways Inner and Outer Eurasia had always been intimately connected and this remained so in Witsen’s time. Although the company had settlements only in Outer Asia, its agents had direct or indirect contacts with non-Dutch people who had traveled in Inner Asia and were prepared to share their knowledge. In most cases Witsen does not reveal how such information was transferred, but many stories must have reached him through VOC channels.

The company was not only important for Witsen as an intermediary or information brokerage, but its activities were also of immediate value for him. VOC expeditions in the Northern and Southern parts of the Pacific Ocean, for instance, inspired him to review in the 1705 edition of his book the theories about the distribution of peoples and languages across the globe (see pp. 157–185). In this hotly debated issue the links between Inner and Outer Eurasia as well as the connections between America and Eurasia were thought to be crucial. Already in classical times it was assumed that somewhere in the depths of Asia there was an *officina gentium* or *vagina populorum*. The idea of a sort of hatchery of peoples in the midst of Tartary had still

number of sources is less than 204 however, because a number of sources are used in more than one chapter.

³⁵ The name or title of this prince is spelled in 40 different versions in *North and East Tartary*.

³⁶ See note 29.

many adherents in Witsen's time. He himself was convinced of the 'Tartarian' origin of the American Indians and the inhabitants of Australia, New Guinea and other Pacific islands.

The Koreans are of Tungusian origin and speak an Altaic language. Witsen did not know that, but he correctly observed that their way of life was partly Tartarian, partly Chinese (43). He could devote a whole chapter to Korea and present a list of Korean words, because some VOC-sailors had involuntarily spent years in this closed kingdom.³⁷ Furthermore, dynasties of 'Tartarian' origin still ruled large parts of Outer Asia where the VOC was active and about which it could deliver reports. In *North and East Tartary* the conquest of China by the 'Tartars of Niukhe' (the Manchus) is repeatedly discussed in detail on the basis of VOC-materials combined with numerous other sources. Quotations from non-Dutch authors like Bernier, Della Valle and Tavernier informed the reader about the Great Moguls, Turkish descendants of Timur Lenk who hailed from Central Asia and ruled now over large parts of India. But Witsen also proudly writes in his book about a complete list of names and a series of miniature portraits of all the 179 Mogul rulers which he could only add to his collection because of the VOC's presence in India (p. 456).³⁸ Furthermore, the only information about the Turkish nomadic origin of the ruling Safavid dynasty in Persia comes from an account of a visit to the Persian court by an envoy of the VOC (461).

Nevertheless the days when large parts of Outer Asia had been governed from the steppes of Inner Asia were definitively over. On the first page of his book Witsen tells us that his fascination for the great empires of Genghis Khan and Timur Lenk had formed the starting point for his interest in Tartary and he devoted many passages to these mighty rulers. But his studies also amply demonstrate how well he realized that in his time changes of global historic significance were taking place in the relations between both parts of Eurasia. After 1700 the 'Tartar' nomads could no longer terrorize the sedentary peoples

³⁷ See Roeper V. – Walraven B. (eds.), *Hamel's world. A Dutch-Korean Encounter in the Seventeenth Century* (Amsterdam: 2003).

³⁸ These portraits are now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. They are excellently described by P. Lunsing Scheurleer, "Het Witsenalbum: Zeventiende-eeuwse Indiase portretten op bestelling", *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 44, 3 (1996) 167–270, although the author overlooked this passage in *North and East Tartary*. In 2008 the 'Witsenalbum' could be seen in the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, at the exhibition *50 x India. The 50 most beautiful miniatures from the Rijksmuseum*. See also fig. 4.



Fig. 4. Anonymous, *True picture of the great Tamerlane after a drawing at the court of the Persian king in Ispahan*. Engraving from N. Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (2nd ed.; Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705). The engraving is not made after a drawing in Isfahan, but after a miniature painting in the series Witsen received from India. Timur Lenk died in 1404, not in 1402.

as they had been able to do since time immemorial. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Muscovy had been the main force behind the domestication of the taiga and the steppe in Eastern Europe and Siberia, and no other author had collected so many data about this development as Witsen.

In Eastern Asia the complete subjugation of the fierce Mongol peoples was beyond Russia's might and this task had to be left mainly to Qing China. During the stay of tsar Peter I in Amsterdam in 1697 Witsen was to meet F.A. Golovin, who had been the Russian representative during the negotiations with China in Nerchinsk in 1689. The friendship with this statesman enabled Witsen to use a large amount of Russian government documents and disclose a number of details about the situation in the border regions between Siberia and China which only at the end of the twentieth century would be surpassed by Russian publications of archival sources.³⁹ At the same time one can find in *North and East Tartary* a fair amount of information about the efforts of the Great Moguls to reconquer Central Asia, dominated by the Uzbeks, or the constant skirmishes of the Persian shahs with these unruly nomadic tribes.

The outcome of Russian, Chinese, Iranian or Indian efforts to subdue the nomadic, 'Tartar' peoples was still unclear in Witsen's lifetime. But when the roads of Inner Eurasia would become safer to travel, unheard opportunities for long-distance trade might open up. Such developments could have vital importance for the VOC's future. The sea route to the Indies was extremely long and hazardous. As one of the company's directors, Witsen had sent an expedition to Australia to find out if there were any survivors of a VOC-ship which had disappeared completely.⁴⁰ Already very early the Dutch had explored the icy Northern seas to find a shorter road to South East Asia, but Witsen did no longer believe in that possibility. Instead he brought together so many accounts about travel along routes through Siberia and Central-Asia to China that *North and East Tartary* to a large extent

³⁹ Quite a number of passages in *North and East Tartary* can be traced back to the documents published in 4 volumes on Russian-Chinese and Russian Mongol relations. See: *Русско-Китайские отношения в XVII веке. Материалы и документы* (Russian-Chinese relations in the seventeenth century. Materials and documents), I [1608–1683] (Moscow: 1969) and II [1686–1691] (Moscow: 1972); *Русско-Монгольские отношения. Сборник документов* (Russian-Mongol Relations. Collection of Documents), I [1654–1685] (Moscow: 1996) and II [1685–1691] (Moscow: 2000).

⁴⁰ See: Schilder G.G. (ed.), *De ontdekkingsreis van Willem Hesselz. De Vlamingh in de jaren 1696–1697* (The Hague: 1976).

became a book of itineraries. When his sources allowed him to do so, he always discussed the activities of merchants along these roads. He knew very well that the European caravel had not made the native caravan redundant. Travel over land throughout Asia was everything but easy, but it could still form a viable alternative to the sea lanes used by the VOC.⁴¹

Two Servants of the VOC: Vries and De Jager

Two brief examples may suffice to show how Witsen utilized the VOC for his investigation of alternative routes to the East. The first concerns the combination of land- and sea routes in the Far East, which according to Witsen could create great economic opportunities. In 1690 he encouraged the tsar in an enthusiastic letter to conquer the Amur region. He did not know then that one year previously the Russians had ceded the area to the Chinese.⁴² When he had acquired, mainly from Russian informants and documents, detailed knowledge about the Treaty of Nerchinsk as well as about Dauria (the Amur region) he still exaggerated the commercial possibilities of the Far East. Already on page 2 of the 1705 edition of his book he states: 'At the seaside to the East are good harbors: and near to the coast are big islands'. On page 8 he adds that their inhabitants regularly trade with the Chinese and Japanese. One of the islands is visible from a rock near the mouth of the Amur (11). His sources also revealed to him that the Amur is completely navigable and full of fish. The region is extremely fertile. Grain yields are enormous and even grapes thrive there. The local roads are good. The population is civilized and industrious. It takes two weeks to sail from the Amur to China (64–65), but the Daurians had only riverboats and no seaworthy vessels (90, 105).

The Dutch, however, had such ships. In February 1643 the VOC *Castricum* and *Breskens* under the command of Maerten Gerritsz. Vries

⁴¹ For modern discussions of this problem see, among others, Adshead S.A.M., *Central Asia in World History* (London: 1993) Chapter 8: "The World Market and Early Modern Central Asia"; Rossabi M., "The 'Decline' of the Central Asian Caravan Trade", in Tracy J.D. (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750* (Cambridge: 1990) 351–370.

⁴² This basic fact is overlooked by Wladimiroff (*De kaart van een verzwegen vriendschap* 144–145). He and Peters (*Mercator Sapiens* 85–88) give more details about this letter.

had left Batavia to discover the coast of Tartary to the North of Japan where the Polysange, a river mentioned by Marco Polo, was thought to flow into the ocean. Vries was also ordered to reconnoiter nearby 'Yezo', a mysterious group of islands or peninsulas reputedly rich in silver and gold. The ships got separated, no precious metals were found and Tartary remained beyond reach. But the *Castricum*, Vries' flagship, discovered three Kurile islands. Without knowing exactly where he was, Vries also landed on Sakhalin and met the local Ainu people. Until 1858, when the accidentally discovered journal of the first navigating officer, Cornelis Jansz. Coen, was published, substantial information about the expedition could only be found in *North and East Tartary*.

For Witsen the exploits of the VOC in the northern parts of the Pacific were of key significance. He not only printed excerpts from the diary of the *Castricum*, but also long letters by two crewmembers. He also quoted from the log of the *Breskens*. Altogether, Witsen devoted 8000 words to the journey in his chapters on 'Dauria' and 'Yezo' where they were placed in the context of other reports and comments, some of which were from VOC-origin, while others originated with other Dutch experts and Jesuits. Main points of focus were the possible connections of 'Yezo' with the Asian mainland or even America (in which Witsen did rightly not believe) and the habits of the obviously 'Tartarian' Ainu. One letter, written by a VOC-official in Japan, mentioned their revolt against their 'arrogant' Japanese overlords on Hokkaido (then the most well known part of 'Yezo') in 1669 (62–3).⁴³ Witsen also published 140 coastal profiles of the islands discovered by Vries, a drawing of 'Compagniesland' (the Kurile island Urup) and a map of 'Staten Eylant' (the Kurile islands Kunashir and Iturup). He tried to sort out the still very unclear geography of the Far East in two maps drawn by his own hand.⁴⁴

⁴³ This was in all probability the first printed communication about the now famous rebellion of Shukushain. In 1970 a statue of this Ainu chief was erected in the town of Shizunai on Hokkaido. For the historical background, see Walker B.L., *The conquest of Ainu Lands. Ecology and culture in Japanese expansion, 1590–1800* (Berkeley: 2001).

⁴⁴ The coastal profiles remained for a long time the only available pictures of the Kuriles. On Witsen's big map of 1687 one can see the Amur and its mouth, but Yezo was not depicted. He tried to do this on *De nieuwe Lant-kaart der Tartars van Niuche* (*New map of the Tartars of Manchuria*) and *Lant-Kaarte van 't Oost – Tartarie* (*Map of Eastern*

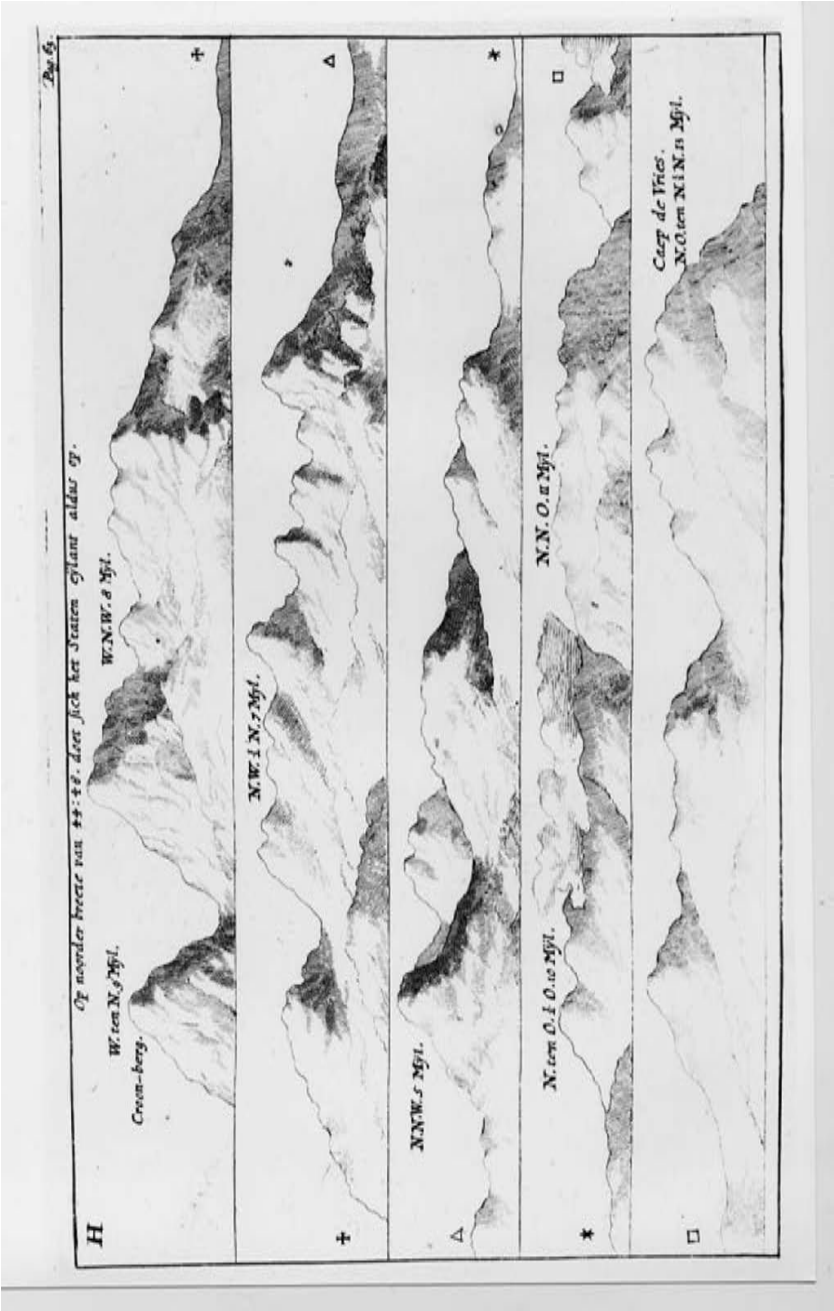


Fig. 5. Anonymous, *Staten Island on a north latitude of 44:48. Coast profile of Kurile islands Kunashir or/and Iurup*. Engraving from N. Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (2nd ed.; Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705).

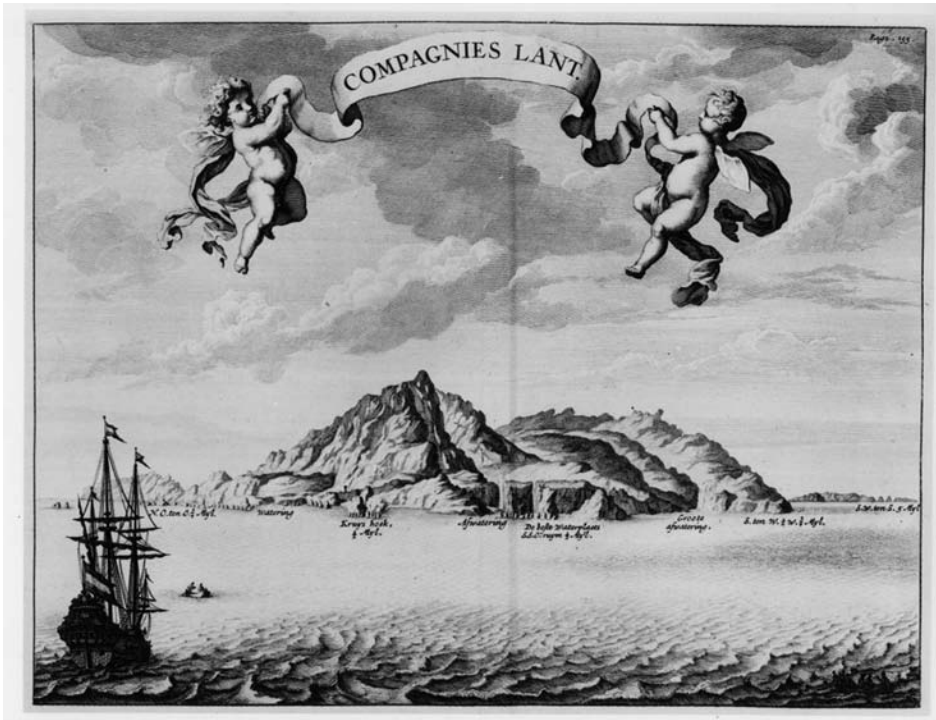


Fig. 6. Anonymous, *Company Island. The Kurile Island of Urup*. Engraving from N. Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (2nd ed.; Amsterdam, François Halma: 1705).

Witsen reproached Vries for returning to Batavia when strong headwinds had prevented him to sail further north. According to him the Polysange of 'the Ancients' could have been the Amur (136) and Vries had been very near its estuary. Because there were excellent conditions for shelter, food and trade, the *Castricum* should have stayed in the area during the winter. In that case it would have been easy to discover other unknown islands, coasts and rivers (94). Witsen could not know that in order to reach the Amur Vries had to sail north around Sakhalin which was 948 km long. In his opinion the *Breskens* also had not done the right thing. Instead of concentrating

Tartary, see Figure 7). Both maps were published for the first time in 1785, in the third posthumous edition of his book.



Fig. 7. N. Witsen, *Map of East Tartary*, after 1705, engraving in N. Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (Amsterdam, M. Schalekamp: 1785).

on the discovery of the islands of Yezo, it sailed fruitlessly 480 miles eastwards (138–139).

Witsen recorded that some crewmembers of the *Breskens* had been taken prisoner by the Japanese at Honshu (129). It took a lot of trouble to get them released.⁴⁵ Dutch ships could no longer risk to forage in Japanese harbors and this made trips far North more hazardous. Witsen published a letter sent in 1644 from Batavia to Holland in which another expedition by Vries was announced (140–142), but nothing had come of it, probably also for this reason. Nevertheless, Witsen must have been disappointed about the VOC's inactivity in the next fifty years, but as one of its directors he could not vent his anger in his book. He, however, quoted a letter by his friend Ides, who had been Russian ambassador to China. Ides found the gentlemen of the VOC miserably uninformed 'about the Northern and Eastern parts

⁴⁵ See: Hesselink R.H., *De gevangenen uit Nambu* (Zutphen: 2000).

of China and Tartary. Their judgment is like that of the blind about color' (118).

In his correspondence with his friend Gijsbert Cuper Witsen firmly criticized the VOC. The company only thought of profit and did not spend minimal funds to accumulate precious knowledge about Asia, although among its personnel were people excellently equipped for such honorable research. One of those had been the linguistic genius Herbert de Jager. When he died (in Batavia in 1694) 'he had left a treasure of learned comments', Witsen wrote to Cuper, 'but they were neglected, because nobody was interested.'⁴⁶ It was however with scholarships of the VOC that this poor peasant son from Zwammerdam had studied in Leyden. Witsen had aided his appointment to a post in Batavia. In return De Jager provided his patron with all sorts of materials, and in his introduction Witsen singled him out for special thanks for this help.

We don't know how much information, collected by De Jager during his work for the VOC in Persia, is used in the more than 300 pages about Turkestan, Mongolia and the caravan roads to China.⁴⁷ Witsen only mentioned him as the author of the 'Special Notes' on the countries to the East and North of Persia (419–435). Immediately after these notes Witsen placed the complete account (16 pages) of a diplomatic mission sent in 1419–22 by Shah Rukh, the son of Timur, from Herat to Peking. This is a remarkable document and one of the most vivid episodes in *North and East Tartary*. The Muslim ambassadors were not only full of praise for the magnificent Buddhist temples and pagodas they visited on their journey, but also for the beautiful girls they met in local inns. They had been probably the first astounded foreigners to enter the Forbidden City, the enormous palace of the Ming emperor, which was not yet completely finished.

The original manuscript, written in Persian by Master Ghiyathuddin the Painter, had been lost, but his text was preserved by several Persian historians of fifteenth and sixteenth century. Witsen published the story already in the first edition of his book. Without mentioning its author or translator, a French version appeared four years later, in 1696, in a posthumous edition of *Recueil de divers voyages curieux* by Melchisidec Thévenot. This librarian of Louis XIV had already

⁴⁶ See Gebhard, *Witsen*, II, 361 and 386.

⁴⁷ For the VOC and Persia, see s'Jacob H.K., "De Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië 1623–1765", *Phoenix* 35, 1 (1989) 81–92.

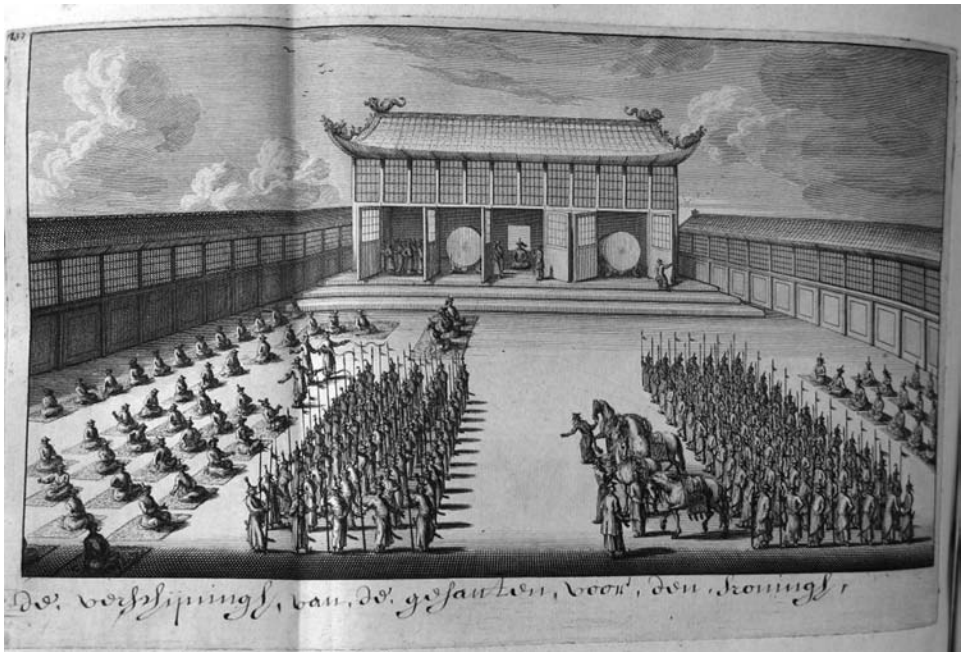


Fig. 8. Anonymous, *The appearance of the ambassadors before the king. Court in the Forbidden City of Peking*. Engraving from N. Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (Amsterdam [s.n.]: 1692). Utrecht, University Library. The print was inserted after 1692. It was also used in Ysbrandt Ides, *Driejaarige Reize naar China* (Amsterdam, François Halma: 1704) 100–101. Ides' book was edited by Witsen.

printed other materials from Witsen without his permission.⁴⁸ In the eighteenth century Ghiyathuddin's attractive narrative was also incorporated in several English and German collections of travels. In the nineteenth and twentieth century it was repeatedly re-translated from the original Persian and it is now considered to be one of the classic texts of the so-called Timurid Renaissance.

In 1843 the French orientalist E.M. Quatremère stated that Antoine Galland, who compiled the famous *Thousand and One Nights*, had been the first translator of the Timurid embassy to the Ming emperor and his contention was accepted by most later scholars.⁴⁹ Thévenot indeed had been Galland's protector, but M. Abdel-Halim, who carefully

⁴⁸ Gebhard, *Witsen*, II, 309–10.

⁴⁹ *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits du Roi*, vol. XIV (Paris: 1843) 13.

studied all Galland's printed work and papers, could find no evidence for this particular translation.⁵⁰ It is far more plausible that De Jager and Witsen had introduced Ghiyathuddin to European readers. De Jager excelled in Persian and the Dutch translation of 1692 is very precise and easily stands the comparison with modern editions.⁵¹ Possibly Witsen had not mentioned De Jager's name because he could not reveal how the source was obtained in Persia. Witsen offered of course many other reports of more contemporary journeys through Central Asia, but he also carefully checked the itinerary of Ghiyathuddin with the help of another late-medieval Persian text about the same route, which he had received from China and which had been translated in Batavia, probably also by De Jager (491–501).

Conclusion

These two examples lucidly reveal how seriously Witsen took his task to enlighten his contemporaries about Inner Eurasia and why his book has still so much to offer to us. There is of course no longer an anti-thesis between the caravan and the caravel, between early modern ocean routes and ancient silk roads, but the dichotomy between Outer and Inner Eurasia has not disappeared. Nowadays we are mesmerized by the economic progress of the Asian rim and countries like India and China again attract our main attention. The Eurasian steppes, on the other hand, seem to have suffered more from the destructive impact of modernity. A Witsen of our time might deplore the devastation of nature, the partial or total disappearance of the nomadic way of life and the extinction of languages and ethnic groups as the inevitable result of that development. At the same time Inner-Eurasia is more important for us than ever before. Old camel or reindeer tracks do not figure prominently on modern maps or in recent books about this huge area, but they almost always deal with things on which the present and the future of the West heavily depend: pipeline trajectories,

⁵⁰ Abdel-Halim M., *Antoine Galland. Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: 1964) 82–84, 235–238, 487.

⁵¹ I compared De Jager's translation with Maitra K.M., *A Persian Embassy to China* (New York: 1970) and "Ghiyathuddin Naqqash Report to Mirza Baysunghur on the Timurid Legation to the Ming Court at Peking", in: Thackston W.M. (ed.), *A Century of Princes. Sources on Timurid History and Art* (Washington – Los Angeles: 1989) 279–321.

mineral deposits or wells of oil and natural gas. Such maps and books also continue a tradition which was started by Witsen. He tried to raise the interest of his readers in the commercial potential of his Tartary by informing them about the locations of all kinds of natural resources, including petroleum, and had samples of Siberian minerals examined in Amsterdam.

However, we cannot praise the topicality of *North and East Tartary* without pointing to the extraordinary obscurity of this work. Only a handful of libraries preserved a copy and the marvelous amount of unique information Witsen had collected during a lifetime never reached a large public. Moreover, the very long and complicated text of the book had been so clumsily composed by the author that readers could hardly understand the real meaning and import of his studies.

So it was not the collector and pioneer Witsen who made a Western audience familiar with the interdependency of Inner and Outer Eurasia. Other authors had to popularize the idea of the similarity and coherence of historical developments in the Eastern and Western parts of the Old World. In the eighteenth century an excellent writer and popular historian like Edward Gibbon was far more successful in this than any expert in Tartarian matters. Gibbon showed in his *Decline and Fall* that not only in Ancient Rome and medieval Constantinople, but often also in Chinese history the fate of the empire had been determined by aggressive and virile nomads able to subdue the more peaceful and sometimes effeminate inhabitants of a sedentary society.⁵² Gibbon's principal authority for the Asian Tartars was his contemporary Joseph de Guignes whose *Histoire Générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols et des autres Tartares Occidentaux* he cited 72 times.⁵³ Gibbon also used Strahlenberg and observed in Chapter 38 that civilized and powerful Russia had taught 'the fiercest of the Tartar hordes to tremble and obey', but he obviously did not know Witsen's *North and East Tartary*.⁵⁴ Although the big map Witsen made of Tartary in 1687

⁵² See, for instance, Morgan D.O., "Edward Gibbon and the East", *Iran* 33 (1995) 85–92.

⁵³ See Machin I.W.J., "Gibbon's debt to contemporary scholarship", *The Review of English Studies* 15 (1939) 86.

⁵⁴ The same is still true for our contemporary, the well known British historian J.G.A. Pocock who in his most exhaustive studies of the intellectual background of *The Decline and Fall* recently devoted three chapters to *De Guignes and the discovery of Eurasia* without even mentioning Witsen once. See Pocock J.G.A., *Barbarism and Religion*, Volume IV (Cambridge: 2005) Part II, 98–133.

was for some time intensively used by other mapmakers,⁵⁵ his book left no traces on the European image of Asia. Nevertheless, it is in many respects still useful. As we have seen it also provides us with the opportunity to approach the relation between trade and knowledge in VOC-circles from an unusual angle.

We do not have to doubt that the company functioned as a quite efficient information network. It had to know all possible trade routes, find out which goods were available and suitable for commerce and discover where accessible markets were located. It had to apprehend the military might, political power and venality of indigenous rulers and also be well aware of the influence native habits, religious customs or regional laws could have on business deals. Information was as essential for commerce as it was for science. No data, no profit. A few top managers of the VOC and a number of its employees, especially the clergymen and medical doctors among them, were academically trained and showed a real scholarly interest in Asian matters. They hoped that their investigations would not only benefit the company and its stockholders, but also serve the progress of science or the enlightenment of a European reading public.

However, the VOC was no Republic of Letters. It had no intention to subsidize lofty quests for knowledge which did not promote its core business: making profit. It also did not want to share all the information it had acquired with people outside the company. At least an essential part of it had to be kept secret because it could be exploited by competitors. Witsen of course agreed with this basic policy, although it sometimes created tensions between commercial and scholarly interests. He made ample use of VOC facilities and personnel for his own private research, but *North and East Tartary* also proves that he was willing to conceal evidence in order not to harm the trade or reputation of this organisation.⁵⁶ He was convinced that his Tartarian hobby could be of great economic importance and naturally resented the fact that people in Batavia saw things differently. Such kind of conflicts

⁵⁵ According to Cahen, *Les cartes de la Sibérie* 5, 'tous les géographes occidentaux l'ont prise pour base durant le premier quart du XVIII^e siècle'.

⁵⁶ In his story about the Dutch sailors in Korea he withheld the information that one of their VOC-ships had been engaged in acts of piracy. Witsen also did not tell his readers that crewmembers of the *Breskens* had been susceptible to the charms of temple prostitutes on Honshu and thus made it easy for Japanese authorities to arrest and imprison them. See: Roeper – Walraven, *Hamel's world* 115, and Hesselink, *De gevangenen uit Nambu* 50–51.

did not disappear completely after the demise of the VOC. The Japanologist Von Siebold (1796–1866), would refer to Witsen and repeat his complaints about Dutch shortsightedness in the early nineteenth century. As in Witsen's case Siebold's expertise was more appreciated by the Russians than by the Dutch. Was Witsen therefore completely justified in his criticisms of greedy and lowbrow VOC-officials?⁵⁷ Or did he enthusiastically overrate the commercial opportunities of Inner Eurasia in the seventeenth and eighteenth century? Even provided with the advantages of hindsight it not so easy for an historian to give a well balanced answer to both questions.

⁵⁷ See the notes of Von Siebold in the nineteenth century edition of Vries' journey: *Reis naar de eilanden ten N. en N.O. van JAPAN door MRT.GERR.VRIES in 1643 [...]* uitgegeven door P.A. Leupe met aantekeningen [...] door P.F. von Siebold (Amsterdam: 1858) 316–317. Von Siebold advised the Russian government to prevent a conflict about Kuriles by a trade agreement with Japan which was indeed concluded in 1855. See Von Siebold P.F., *Urkundliche Darstellung der Bestrebungen von Niederland und Russland zur Eröffnung Japans für die Schifffahrt und den Seehandel aller Nationen* (Bonn: 1854). See also Kouwenhoven A. – Forrer M., *Siebold and Japan. His Life and Work* (Leiden: 2000) 39; 41; 44–47; 54; 62–63.

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SOUTH AFRICA

(EX)CHANGING KNOWLEDGE AND NATURE AT THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE, CIRCA 1652–1700.*

Alette Fleischer

Introduction

The Dutch East India Company, the General Government at Batavia, and the Cape Government may be compared to three seas, each having a distinctive source, yet flowing into one another. Ebb and flow would constantly re-act upon them – from Holland to Batavia, and back from Batavia to Holland; from Holland to the Cape, and back from the Cape to Holland; from Batavia to the Cape and back again to Batavia – thus the tide would come and go. These seas must also be regarded as of great depth, but in surface area the one representing the Cape is very small in comparison to the rest, which, however, does not impede its tidal flow and reaction upon the other seas.

With this written representation the German Otto Mentzel ended the first part of his three-volume book on the Cape of Good Hope, having spent eight years (1733–1741) in the Dutch colony.¹ He compared the three stations of the VOC to three watercourses that transformed and transported people, information and goods. He clearly saw the significance of the Cape colony as contributor to the vast VOC network. Indeed, the founding years of South Africa's colony highlight this 'tidal flow' of knowledge, people, and objects to and from the Cape. The agricultural enterprise of the Dutch trading company allowed for an intersection of local knowledge, nature, and networks that then flowed via the VOC channels to distant Amsterdam or Batavia.

* I would like to thank the participants of the conference 'Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks' for their comments on an earlier version of this paper, and in particular Professor Siegfried Huigen for his valuable suggestions and kind help. I also deeply thank Dr. Lissa Roberts for her intellectual and personal support and her advice on earlier versions of my paper. This research was made possible thanks to an Aspasia graduate fellowship from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

¹ Mentzel O.F., *A Geographical and Topographical Description of the Cape of Good Hope*, ed. H.J. Mandelbrote, 3 vols. (Cape Town: 1921) vol. I, 181. Batavia is nowadays known as Jakarta, Indonesia.

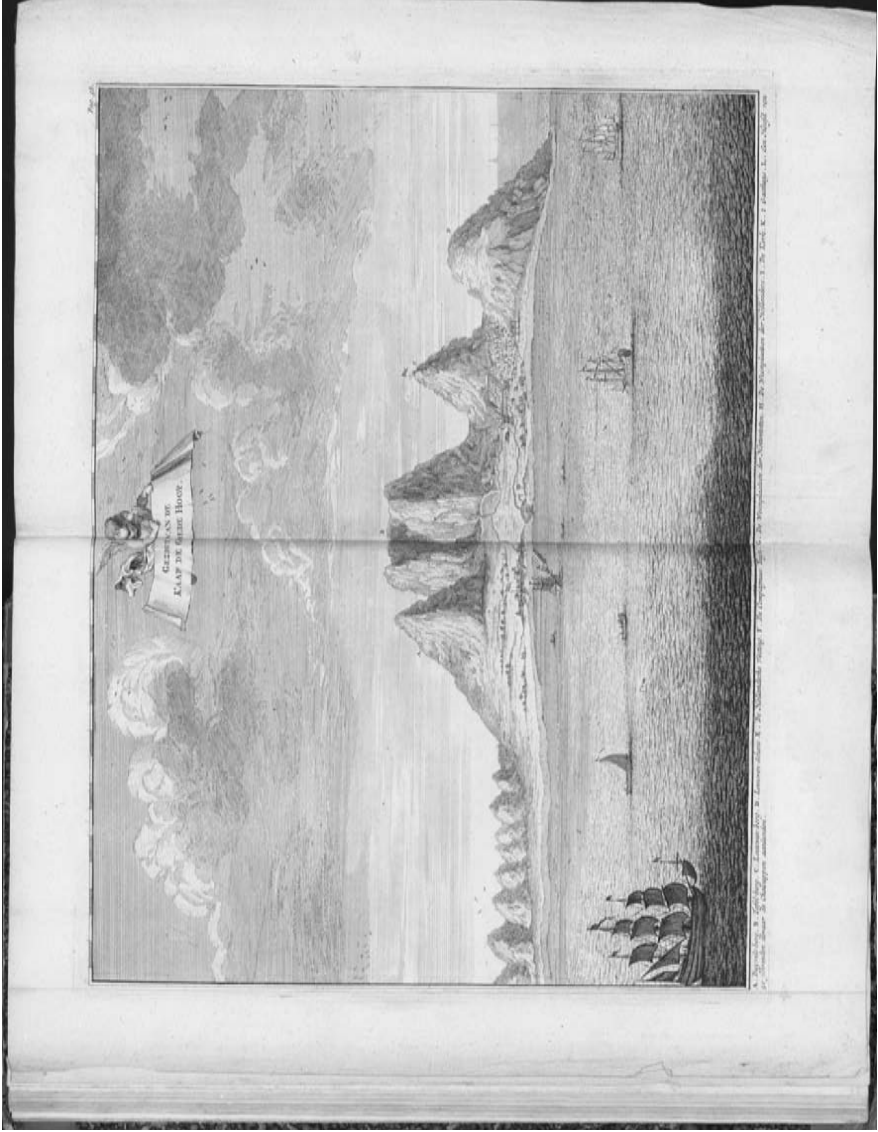


Fig. 1. Peter Kolb, *View on Cape of Good Hope*. Engraving from P. Kolb, *Naukeurige en uitvoerige beschryving van Kaap de Goede Hoop* (Amsterdam, Balthazar Lakeman: 1727), vol. 1, 58. Amsterdam, University Library.

In 1652, the Dutch began a refreshment station at Table Bay as part of their commercial expansion. Here, passing ships were revictualized while sailors regained their health. The VOC provided fresh vegetables and fruits from its garden and bartered cattle with the indigenous people of the Cape, the Khoikhoi, for their meat and dairy products.² The founding of the Company's garden (as the garden was referred to) entailed experimenting with local and imported plants and the exploration of the uncharted territories in search for profitable merchandise and fertile lands. Commerce and cultivation, in short, went hand in hand with a growing understanding and possession of the Cape's natural and geographical knowledge, and simultaneously allowed for an exchange of information and goods between the networks of the settlers and the locals.

Broadening our scope, this paper considers the Cape Peninsula in its entirety as a garden; a utilitarian 'nature' created for the production of food. The vast wilderness invited settlers to take these lands and 'improve' it, turning it into orderly and geometrically designed parcels.³ Since the emergence of the Cape settlement the vast grounds were transformed into a Dutch-European landscape that yielded cereals, orchards, pastures, and vineyards. In private and Company gardens grew vegetables and fruits, as well as medicinal and aesthetical plants and trees from various parts of the world. For the Dutch, gardening justified the colonization and transformation of the Cape.

² The VOC made a distinction between the hunter/gatherers San (or Bushmen) and the herdsmen Khoikhoi (or Hottentots), which was based on practices (hunting or herding) rather than 'race'. I chose to use 'Khoikhoi' as an encompassing name. For a detailed account on the various uses and meanings of Khoikhoi and San see: Elbourne E., *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853* (Montreal-Kingston: 2002) 71–75. VOC personnel or 'the Dutch' originated from the Dutch Republic and other parts of Europe; they were mostly Germans but also Scandinavians, Poles, Portuguese, and French. See Gelder R. van, *Het Oost-indisch avontuur. Duitsers in dienst van de VOC* (Nijmegen: 1997).

³ See Drayton R., *Nature's Government; Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Delhi: 2005), chapter 3, for an in-depth discussion on agriculture and gardening as justification for colonization of wild nature, and Fleischer A., "The Beemster Polder: Conservative Invention and Holland's Great Pleasure Garden", in Roberts L. – Schaffer S. – Dear P. (eds.) *The Mindful Hand; Inquiry and Invention from the late Renaissance to early Industrialisation* (Amsterdam: 2007) 145–166, on the improvement of 'untamed' nature into a well-managed agricultural nature in the first decade of the seventeenth century Holland. See also Jong E. de, *Natuur en Kunst, Nederlandse tuin- en landschapsarchitectuur 1650–1740* (Hilversum: 1995), esp. 41, who argues that the art of agriculture 'tames the wilderness into a man-made landscape'.

Through its extensive network the Company headquarters in Amsterdam stimulated the accumulation of natural knowledge. Primarily for commercial reasons, the seventeen board members of the VOC, also known as the Gentlemen Seventeen, demanded regular shipments of descriptions, charts, and drawings of the Cape's nature and natives. This information allowed the Company to control their interests while cultivating these distant lands and people. The VOC's motivations thus fuelled the ongoing pursuit of natural and geographical knowledge for profit and power.

Historian of science Klaas van Berkel argues in his article on the role of the VOC and the pursuit of natural scientific research that the VOC was a reluctant patron of natural knowledge. He focuses specifically on natural scientific researches undertaken by individual VOC employees who in their spare time compiled manuscripts on local natural history, and largely disconnects the VOC's commercial interest from the production of natural knowledge.⁴ But the goals of the VOC in fact demanded a constant flow of written and pictorial representations of the various natures and cultures encountered by its commercial reach. These representations helped the Company's trade network to amass further (natural) knowledge. The Cape fort and Company garden functioned as a node where the networks of the VOC and the Khoikhoi intersected, thereby encountering *and* appropriating unknown kinds of knowledge and practices.

The accumulation and circulation of European and Khoikhoi knowledge took place through the Company's gardening practices, revealing differences in how the settlers and natives used the land. But mutual encounters, shared experiences and experiments simultaneously created a space for negotiation: a middle ground.⁵ This space accommodated exchanges of information and goods for both parties. Europeans, for their part, transformed their acquisitions into transportable parcels for European centres, where material goods were further processed, refined and sold, and information became authorized and dispersed. Like the other goods in which European travellers and

⁴ Berkel K. van, "Een onwillige mecenas? De rol van de VOC bij het natuurwetenschappelijk onderzoek in de zeventiende eeuw", in Bethelém J. – Meijer A.C. (eds.), *VOC en Cultuur* (Amsterdam: 1993) 39–58. He illustrates this tension by focussing on Van Reece's *Hortus Malabaricus*, and Rumphius's books on the natural history of Ambon.

⁵ White R., *The Middle Ground, Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge-New York: 2007).

traders dealt, this knowledge was collected, traded, transported, and adapted as a way of representing and possessing distant natures and cultures. This process can be spoken of in terms of the circulation of knowledge.⁶

Part and parcel of the circulation of knowledge was the VOC's growing demand for and supply of knowledge and goods in order to expand their trade business. Natural riches, useful plants, fresh water, and fertile land were transformed into charts, drawings, reports, herbals, and samples, and brought back to Europe. The trading network facilitated the flow of information and goods, while linking circulation to collection. This process was based on decades of creating surplus; a surplus of food, wealth, power, art, gardens, and natural knowledge which merchants, elites, amateurs, gardeners, and others contained in public or private 'centres of accumulation'.

With or without the VOC's consent, agricultural and trade activities at the Cape went hand in hand with the inquiry and exploration of what appeared to European sojourners as an empty landscape. Though the land was already identified and inhabited by the Khoikhoi in their own nomadic way, the Dutch reconstituted it and turned it into a land that was fenced in, staked out, mapped, and possessed by the plough and on paper. Dutch representations showed uninhabited grounds, which invited VOC domination. Their texts, charts, and history effaced the Khoikhoi's nomadic traces, while strengthening the knowledge base on which the VOC depended. The Khoikhoi in turn tried to understand the Dutch and their culture. They used this knowledge to inform (or warn) other Khoikhoi groupings about these Europeans, their fire arms, their endless desire for cattle, and large quantities of trade goods.

This paper argues that representations were ways to claim 'nature'. By transforming the wilderness into a geometrical nature the Dutch shifted from a situation of dependency on the local population to one of domination and control. To map this process, we begin with the founding of the colony and the way the settlers proceeded to cultivate the Cape, gradually controlling the land and its inhabitants. The next section will focus on the natives of the Cape and their representation of its nature. The penultimate section will discuss how Khoikhoi and

⁶ Latour B., *Science in Action; How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge MA.: 2003), notably chapter 6, "Centres of Calculation", 215–257.

Dutch constructed a platform of communication and exchange where both parties tried to take the lead over the other.

The VOC ultimately proved more powerful as its knowledge network was amenable to stable travel and broad application such as producing maps, charts, and other standardized modes of knowledge communication. Ironically, perhaps, it was this double characteristic of stable mobility that enabled representatives of the VOC to establish not only a trading and refreshment post at the Cape, but also to claim and cultivate a broad stretch of territory that had once been the roaming grounds of the Cape's native peoples. These original inhabitants, who had at first agreed – reluctantly or not – to share a small section of their land with the Dutch as a sort of middle ground, found themselves increasingly marginalized and living in a land defined by others.⁷

Cultivating the Cape

In 1652 Commander Jan van Riebeeck landed at Table Bay to set up a permanent refreshment station for the VOC.⁸ This natural harbour had already been in use for several decades by passing ships of Portuguese, English, and Dutch origin to collect fresh water and barter food with the natives. Van Riebeeck's small fleet of three ships, how-

⁷ See: White, *The Middle Ground* and Latour, *Science in Action*.

⁸ There is extensive literature and archival material (published and online) on the founding years of Cape of Good Hope. For example: *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of Cape of Good Hope, Cape Town Archives Repository, South Africa* <http://databases.tanap.net/cgh/>; Bosman D.B. – Thom H.B. (eds.), *Daghregister gehouden by den oppercoopman Jan Anthonisz van Riebeeck*, 3 vols. (Cape Town: 1952–1957); Schapera I. – Farrington E. (eds.), *The Early Cape Hottentots* (Westport: 1970); Mentzel, O.F., *A Geographical and Topographical Description*, ed. H.J. Mandelbrote, 3 vols. (Cape Town: 1921); Tachard G., *Voyage to Siam* (Bangkok: 1999); Valentyn F., *Beschryvinge van de Kaap der Goede Hoop met de zaaken daar toe behorende*, eds. Serton P. – Raven-Hart R. – Kock W.J. de (Cape Town: 1971); Vogel J.W., *Vogels Ost-Indianische Reise, Beschreibung in Drey Theile abgetheilet* (Altenburg, Joh. Ludwig Richters: 1716). See for recent literature: Versteegen M., *De Indische Zeeherberg, De stichting van Zuid-Afrika door de VOC* (Zaltbommel: 2001); Biewenga A.W., *De Kaap de Goede Hoop, Een Nederlandse vestigingskolonie, 1680–1730* (Amsterdam: 1999); Elphick R., *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (Johannesburg: 1985); Guelke L., “The Anatomy of a Colonial Settler Population: Cape Colony 1657–1750”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21, 3 (1988) 453–473; Böeseken A.J., *Memoriën en instructiën 1657–1699* (Cape Town: 1966); Schoeman K., *Armosyn van die Kaap, die wêreld van 'n slavin, 1652–1733* (Cape Town: 2001); Hall M., “The Archaeology of Colonial Settlement in Southern Africa”, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22 (1993) 177–200.

ever, came here to stay, carrying with them the necessary materials for houses, furniture, household and farming utensils, pens, ink, and paper, and merchandise for the local inhabitants.⁹ The tasks expected from the settlers entailed setting up houses, building a fortress, bartering for cattle, exploring and charting unfamiliar landscapes. The VOC justified the colonization and exploration of the Cape by declaring its land vacant, as there was no indication of agriculture, housing, or other signs of ownership. The first priority of the settlers was building a fortress and changing the Cape's untamed nature into an orderly garden.

To make the settlement a success, the VOC regularly hired soldiers with gardening, farming, and other handicraft skills.¹⁰ They were ordered to prepare the soil by clearing it from weeds, shrubs, and rock, since the land 'was covered with thick growing, shrubby plants of various heather types and proteas.'¹¹ Hendrik Boom, who was appointed as the Company's gardener, began to his task by staking out a rectangular plot of land close to the Fort. This was to become the first Company garden, which over time expanded from fifteen to circa forty-two acres (or 21 morgen)¹² [Fig. 2].

Boom had brought vegetable and herb seeds from Holland, and as he cleared the ground he started planting and experimenting with plants from around the world. Like any trained gardener Boom used a geometrical form for the general layout which he divided into smaller square or rectangular compartments.¹³ He sowed cabbages, carrots, and 'other root vegetables', herbs such as rosemary and laurel, various cereals, numerous fruit trees and grapevines originating from all parts of Europe. He successfully planted pineapples, sweet potatoes, calabash, cucumbers, Indian radish, banana, peanuts, 'and all other imaginable seeds [...]' from the America's and Indies. In January 1653 he received various seeds from skipper Teunis Eyssen of the galliot Swarte

⁹ Karsten M., *The Old Company's Garden at the Cape and its Superintendents; Involving an Historical Account of the Early Cape Botany* (Cape Town: 1951) 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., 73, VOC servants Oldenland and Hartog were offered employment at the Company's garden. See also: *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of Cape of Good Hope*. Reference code: C. 1, 372–373. The entry of 4 September 1658 lists various names of soldiers to be employed at the Cape.

¹¹ Schoeman, *Armosyn van die Kaap* 18–19.

¹² One morgen is circa 2 acres.

¹³ On the lay out of gardens, see Groen J. van der, *Den Nederlandtsen hovenier* (Amsterdam, Marcus Doornick: 1670). On the function of the compartments: Harris S., "How the garden grew: a brief spatial history of the Cape Town Gardens", *Vassa Journal* 7 (2002). <http://www.vassa.org.za/pubs/VASSA%20Journal%207%20June%202002.pdf>.

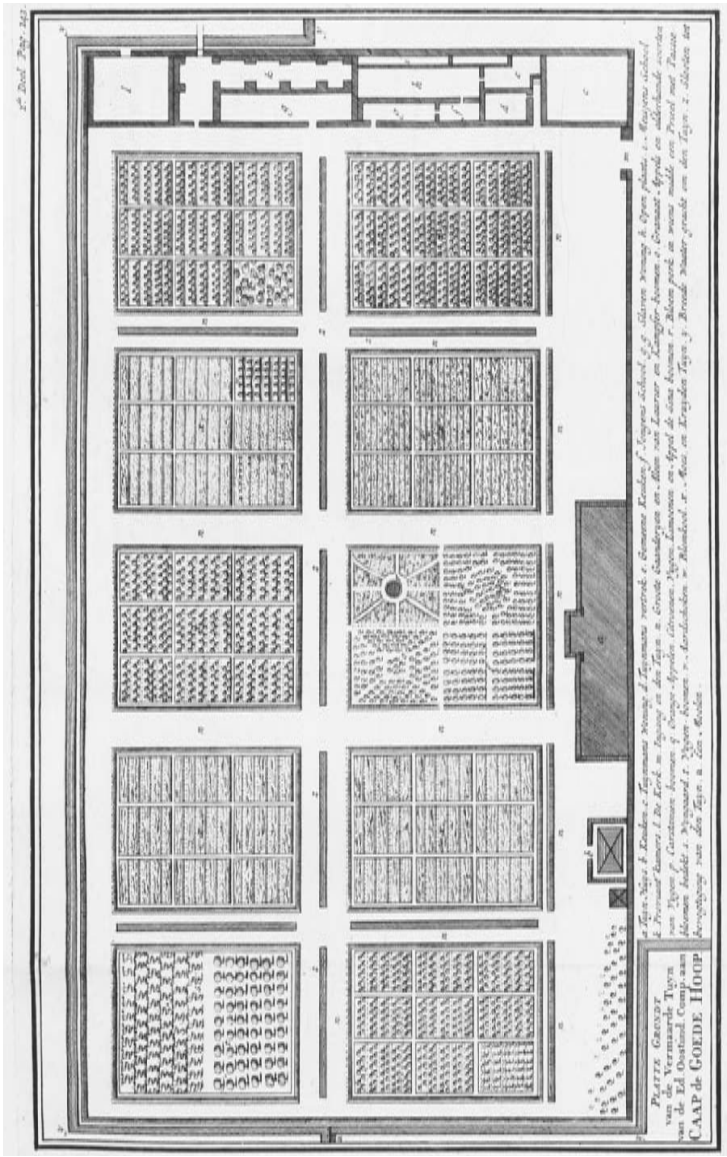


Fig. 2. Peter Kolb, *Map of the Company's garden*. Engraving from P. Kolb, *Naaukeurige en uitvoerige beschryving van Kaap de Goede Hoop* (Amsterdam, Balthazar Lakeman: 1727) vol. II, 243. Amsterdam, University Library.

Vos, who had passed Pernambuco (Brazil) on his way to the Cape. Boom reported that ‘some Brazil pumpkin, melon, and watermelon seeds [were] already sprouting beautifully.’¹⁴ From Batavia, this garden received various plants such as banana, guava, tea, and camphor.

In 1686, a French visitor noted that ‘[t]his garden is arranged in compartments. In one may be seen the rarest fruit-trees and plants of Asia, in another the most select fruit-bearing trees of Africa, in a third those trees that are common in Europe, in a fourth some that have been introduced from America’.¹⁵ The Company’s garden became a testing ground of seeds, roots, and plants, not only from Holland and Batavia, but shipped directly from all parts of the world, through the extensive Dutch commercial network. It showcased the orderliness as well as the wealth and might of Dutch enterprise while simultaneously feeding hungry settlers and sailors. In this sense, it can be compared to a scientific laboratory in which local conditions are minimized as much as possible, in favour of constructing a standardized environment in which the same results can be achieved as in any other such space, regardless of the actual geographical setting.¹⁶ By recontouring the ground along geometrical lines and planting it with seeds drawn from elsewhere, VOC gardeners sectioned off a part of nature from its local situation in order to nurture the global network of which it was now an integrated node.

The garden’s produce was not immediately successful, however. In the first years the imported Dutch saplings were washed away by the May rains and harvests destroyed by the dry south-eastern winds.¹⁷ Failing to reap the imported crops that were necessary to avoid scurvy or starvation, the Dutch resorted to preparing and eating local plants with which they had become familiar through their native ‘hosts’. In February 1654 reserve officer candidate Johan Nieuhof mentioned in his journal how ‘the scurvy had such a grip on many of our crew, that it was high time to seek for refreshing, since we could hardly work the ship any longer. I went ashore [...] and brought back to the ship a

¹⁴ Karsten, *The Old Company’s Garden* 24.

¹⁵ Strangman E., *Early French Callers at the Cape* (Cape Town-Johannesburg: 1936) 159. French ambassador Chevalier de Chaumont visited the garden in 1686.

¹⁶ A number of historians and sociologists of science commented on this process, where human and environmental spaces are standardized in order to accommodate the production of scientific knowledge. David Livingstone sums this up by calling laboratories ‘placeless places’. Livingstone D.N., *Putting Science in its Place, Geography’s of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: 2003) 23.

¹⁷ Versteegen, *De Indische Zeeverberg* 31–40.

quantity of mustard-leaves, to be boiled for the refreshing of the crew'. He tried a 'certain little root [that] grows in the earth, which the Hotentots roast in Winter, and use in place of bread. Some grind these roots to meal. The taste of some is like that of earth-nuts [aert-ekelen] or chestnuts, although others taste like aniseed, and sweetish'.¹⁸

The Cape natives living close to the Fort had informed the settlers also about the edibility of the wild asparagus.¹⁹ They showed them as well how to prepare bitter almonds, which were poisonous when eaten uncooked. Van Riebeeck reported to the VOC that he would try these at his earliest convenience. The VOC-servants took over this local knowledge of plants, their edible or medicinal uses, and the ways of preparing them. Meanwhile, Boom and his gardeners planted the evergreen almond shrubs with their thick foliage as a hedge around the gardens against animal and human intruders.²⁰

When Nieuhof visited the garden near the Fort it was circa '15 morgen, grown with all sorts of plants [...] olives, oranges, peaches, apricots, and other fruit-trees'. He noticed that nearby '[t]he flat fields and valleys are overgrown with grass and sweet-smelling herbs and flowers, and rye, wheat, rice and barley could also be produced, if they were sown [...]'.²¹ These fields were progressively put under the plough, driven by a persistent need for fresh vegetables, cereals, and dairy products. To exploit these lands in the least expensive way, the Company handed out land grants to those who wanted to take up farming.²² A locally adapted form of European farming practices thus spread and transformed the landscape. The VOC granted gardener Boom's wife, Annetje Joris, who had been a farmer in Holland, the lease of a plot of land and ten cows outside the fortress. If she was successful the Cape Commander would allow other 'spouses' to do the same.²³ On Pieter Potter's map of the fortress and the Company's gardens (M) the rectangular shapes marked W indicate the gardens of the free burghers

¹⁸ Raven-Hart R., *Cape Good Hope 1652–1702, The First Fifty Years of Dutch Colonisation as seen by Callers* (Cape Town: 1971) vol. I. Johan Nieuhof, 11 and 14.

¹⁹ Karsten, *The Old Company's Garden* 3.

²⁰ Ibid., 3–4, 56–7, 60. Valentyn, *Beschryvinge van de Kaap der Goede Hoope* 206.

²¹ Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope 1652–1702* 13–14.

²² Marks, "Khoisan Resistance" 55–80. See also Guelke L. – Shell R., "Landscape of Conquest: Frontier Water Alienation and Khoikhoi Strategies of Survival, 1652–1780", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, 4 (1992) 803–824.

²³ *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of Cape of Good Hope*. Reference code: C. 1, 1 October 1655.

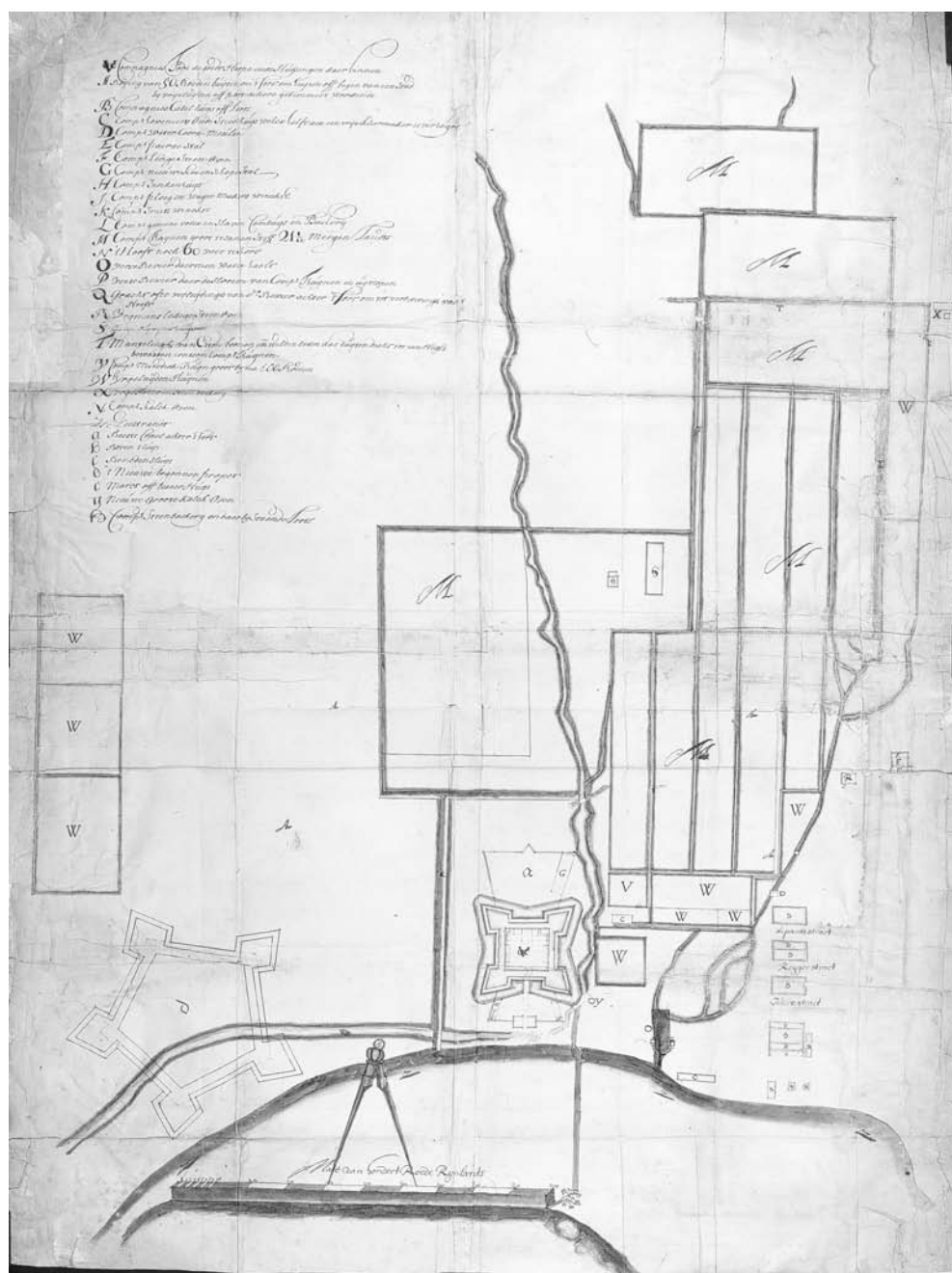


Fig. 3. Pieter Potter, *Map of the Company's garden and fortress*, c. 1665. The Hague, Nationaal Archief, 4.VEL 825.

[Fig. 3]. Already in 1657, governor Rijklof van Goens suggested in his memorandum to the VOC 'to bring circa 3250 morgen of land under culture, which should suffice for the first ten years, more would mean too a large a settlement.'²⁴

The settlement required not only more crops to feed its inhabitants and passing ships, but also a larger number of cattle for meat and dairy products and oxen for use as drought animals. In 1658, the VOC launched an expedition to find cattle and combined this search with a cartographic and environmental survey. There were strong rumours regarding a large group of Khoikhoi with cattle. Fires seen around the 'mountains of Africa' and near the 'Great Bergriver' confirmed this notion.²⁵ Van Riebeeck assembled a group of 'fifteen strong men' and took copper, tobacco and pipes as tokens of friendship to lure the Khoikhoi to the colony. Sergeant Jan van Harwerden had orders to ask for their names and to find out if this group had any valuable merchandise such as ivory, ostrich eggs, civet, gold, or stones. Land surveyor Pieter Potter had to make relevant notes and observations 'regarding the lands, mountains, rivers, and turn his findings into reliable charts so that in the future one would always know which route to take'.²⁶ The goal of accumulating information was to help the VOC employees gain a stronger position against the natives and thus make them less dependent on local guides. With every next visit more information could be collected and used to correct or perfect Potter's chart.²⁷

These types of maps and descriptions made it possible to turn data about the local ground into abstract and easy to 'read' information, transportable for interpretation and use by the VOC in Amsterdam²⁸ [Fig. 4]. The land surveyor represented the Cape territory in these charts as empty, without any indication of the native people. Thus it illustrated the growing VOC dominion, marking the landscape only with traces of the Dutch: the fortress, the garden and a proposition for further agricultural developments.²⁹ The map of ca. 1656 'informed'

²⁴ Böeseken A.J., *Memoriën en instructiën 1657–1699* Instruksie van Rijklof van Goens sr., 16 april 1657, 5.

²⁵ This area is to this day known as 'Hottentots Holland'.

²⁶ *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of Cape of Good Hope*. Reference code: C. 1, 25 February 1658.

²⁷ Latour, *Science in Action* 217.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 244.

²⁹ See for more detailed maps: www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl.

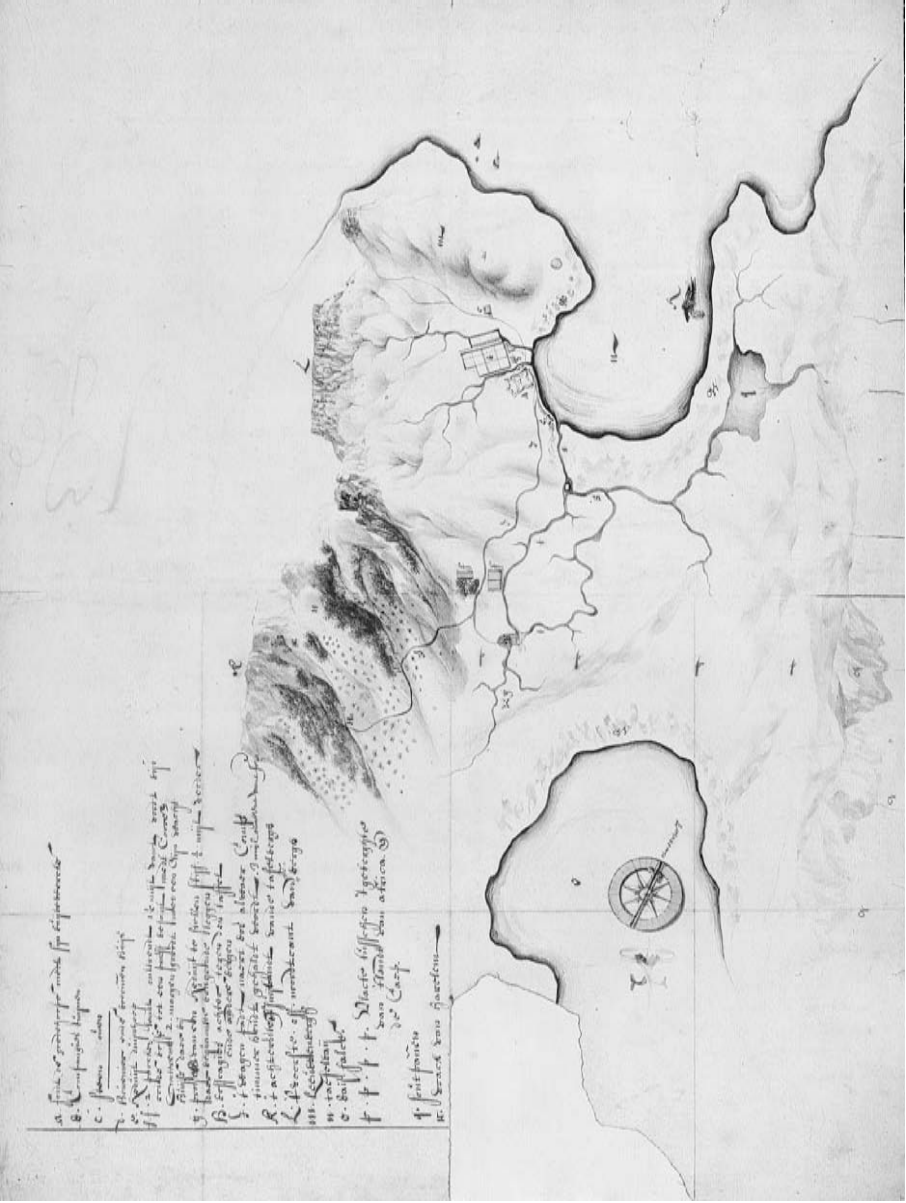


Fig. 4. Anonymous, *Map of Cape of Good Hope with trial farmlands with sowed corn*, c. 1656. The Hague, Nationaal Archief, 4.VEL 803

the Gentlemen Seventeen of the possibilities to pursue the cultivation of land for the benefit of the VOC, but this was information that basically had already alienated the ground from its native inhabitants.

In 1695 the Khoikhoi do appear on a map made by land surveyor Isaac de Graaff, but their presence is based on Dutch terms. The drawing illustrates the ongoing cultivation and colonization of the Cape, well beyond the peninsula [Fig. 5]. De Graaff has drawn multiple farmsteads along the area's rivers, and indicated the location of the Company's pastures, their different geological characteristics and the names of the various regions. In or close to the mountains the map shows circles of huts, described as the 'corrals of the Hottentots'. Not only is this chart more detailed than the map of 1656, but it also includes the nomadic Khoikhoi, fixing their habitation to certain locations. The representation shows both the expanding agricultural activities of the Dutch and highlights their dominion over the Cape territory and the native inhabitants. It demonstrates how the VOC was taking possession of the land and water sources, pushing the Khoikhoi increasingly towards less fertile grounds. Thus the power of the plough, paper texts and charts combined with the accumulation and translation of local knowledge in order to enable the Dutch settlers and the VOC to control the area and alienate the Khoikhoi from their own land.

The Khoikhoi

In VOC reports and travel journals, the Dutch described their trading partners as illiterate, savage, unruly, depraved, and 'bereft of all science and literature, very uncouth, and in intellect more like beasts than men'.³⁰ In the eyes of the Europeans, the nomadic appeared 'slack and lazy, rather than honourably maintaining, feeding, clothing themselves &c. in that manner [of the Dutch]'.³¹ This illustrated how Europeans regarded the natives as uncultivated 'others'.³² Underneath the often-

³⁰ Dapper O., "Kaffraria or Land of the Kafirs, also named Hottentots", in Schapera – Farrington, *The Early Cape Hottentots* 45.

³¹ Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope 1652–1702* 118–119. The account of Johan Schreyer, 1668.

³² Guelke L. – Guelke J.K., "Imperial Eyes on South Africa; reassessing travel narratives", *Journal of Historical Geography* 30, 1 (2004) 11–31. The authors remind us of the colonial motivations of writers of travel journals and their ambivalent view on the indigenous people.



Fig. 5. Isaac de Graaff, *Map of Cape of Good Hope*, c. 1695. The Hague, Nationaal Archief, 4.VEL 809

repeated Western representation, however, laid the mundane reality of the natives' habitation.

The Khoikhoi 'possessed' the Cape through their knowledge of the land.³³ This was described by various Western sources. Johannes Grevenbroek who was secretary to the Cape Commander, mentioned in his journal that they lived 'for the most part on beef, mutton, all sorts of game, and other flesh that suits their taste, well roasted or boiled [...] and [...] also on wild fruits and roots, and other unpurchased victuals'.³⁴ The French traveller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier found that '[t]hese Kaffers [sic], however beastly they are, yet have a special knowledge of herbs, which they know how to use against the sicknesses from which they suffer, as the Dutch have proved'.³⁵ Grevenbroek believed that the natives were 'also able to foretell the weather',³⁶ since the nomads followed with their cattle the rains and the seasons searching for fresh grasslands and water, returning to the same spot maybe once a year, sometimes every two years. The quest for fresh grass had led to the Khoikhoi practice of regularly burning old and dry grass to enable the growth of young grass. The Dutch later copied this local custom. The German VOC servant Peter Kolb reported that the settlers had adopted manipulation of nature after 'having seen, learned and approved of it'.³⁷

The German VOC assayer Johann Wilhelm Vogel observed that 'they [the Khoikhoi] live without cares, and consider the Europeans as slaves, in that they cultivate the land and live in forts and houses'.³⁸

³³ Regarding indigenous knowledge networks see: Watson-Verran H. – Turnbull D., "Science and Other Indigenous Knowledge Systems", in Jasanoff S. – Markle G.E. – Petersen J.C. – Pinch T. (eds.) *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (London-New Delhi: 1995) 115–139, and Chambers D.W. – Gillespie R., "Locality in the History of Science: Colonial Science, Technoscience, and Indigenous Knowledge", *Osiris* 15 (2000) 221–240.

³⁴ Grevenbroek J.G., "An elegant and accurate account of the African race", in Schapera – Farrington (eds.), *The Early Cape Hottentots* 179. Harris, "How the garden grew" 2. For more information on plants, see Augusto G., "Knowledge Free and 'Unfree': Epistemic Tensions in Plant Knowledge at the Cape in the 17th and 18th Centuries", *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies – Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity* 2, 2 (2007) 136–182, and Scholtz, *Naamgewing aan Plante en Diere in Afrikaans*.

³⁵ Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope 1652–1702* 68.

³⁶ Grevenbroek J.G., "An elegant and accurate account", in Schapera – Farrington (eds.), *The Early Cape Hottentots* 245.

³⁷ Kolb P., *Naaukeurige en uitvoerige beschryving van de Kaap de Goede Hoop* (Amsterdam, B. Lakeman: 1727) vol. I, 463. VOC servant Johann Wilhelm Vogel noted this in 1679, see: Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope 1652–1702* 213.

³⁸ Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope 1652–1702* 218.

It seemed that the Khoikhoi found the Western customs just as alien. The settlers were slaves of their lifestyle, constantly busy with accumulating, storing, and distributing foods and goods. The nomads, on the other hand, were only dictated by the rhythm of the seasons and the search for nourishment. They could simply pick up their necessities and move with their beasts to other pastures and find vegetables, meat, herbs, and water. The independent Khoikhoi decided when to visit the colony and trade their excess cattle and sheep for which they demanded quality copper and fresh tobacco.³⁹ They knew that the Dutch depended for their survival on their cattle and other food supplies.

During the first years a small group of cattle-less hunter/gatherer group from the Table Bay, known as the *Goringhaicona* (dubbed beach rangers), supplied the Dutch with firewood, food, and information. They had become familiar with certain European merchandise from previous encounters with recurrent Portuguese, English, and Dutch East Indiamen and their trade wares: copper, iron, alcohol, and tobacco. These desirable items were handed out as tokens of friendship and exchanged for food, assistance, and information. The locals used these goods as currency to barter for cattle with inland Khoikhoi. Seen from a Khoikhoi standpoint, these passing European tradesmen were like them: periodically returning to the same spot, but instead of carrying their wares on oxen, they were using large sailing ships.⁴⁰ This notion of a nomadic European counterpart changed when the Cape natives realised that the settlers were there to stay. With the establishment of the settlement and garden the tension between the two cultures began to take shape.

From Middle Ground to Different Lands

The evolved visions regarding the 'other' fuelled a mutual distrust. This must be dealt with to allow for bartering goods or acquiring information. Both parties had to be willing to accommodate a middle ground and create ways of communication and rules of exchange.⁴¹ One form

³⁹ Schoeman, *Armosyn van die Kaap* 47.

⁴⁰ Elphick R., *Khoikhoi and the founding of White South Africa* (Johannesburg: 1985) 86.

⁴¹ White R., *The Middle Ground* 50–93.

of constituting a middle ground was through establishing a language by using signs and words. The aforementioned Grevenbroek noticed that natives had acquired 'a good speaking knowledge of Dutch'. He advised the settlers to learn Khoikhoi since the 'Dutch ought to be aware how firm a bond of union a common language is, and how powerful a means it is of keeping peoples loyal and peaceful'.⁴²

Learning a language was, as Grevenbroek observed, a way to bond with the 'other' and control the middle ground. However, maintaining one's own tongue as a dominant language signifies power over the 'other'. In the first years the Dutch knew the local names of different groups they encountered but replaced them with Dutch names. In May 1662 Van Riebeeck described the native groups for his successor Commander Zacharias Wagenaer. He listed that the *Goringhaicona* were known as beach rangers and were related to the Caapmen or *Goringhaiquas* and the *Gorachouquas* or tobacco thieves (they obviously received this name after stealing tobacco). These groups roamed around Table Bay. He also mentioned that near Saldanha Bay lived the *Cochoquas*, also known as the Saldanhars and the *Chariguriquas*. Deeper in land, Van Riebeeck recorded, lived the *Chainouquas*, the *Heusaquas* and the *Namaquas*. The last had 'after a long journey, been discovered by our people'.⁴³

The groups living closest to the settlement received Dutch names, whereas the more distant ones kept their Khoikhoi names. The foreignness of the Cape, its people and its language motivated the Dutch to stay within their own terminology with the first encountered groups. The progressive familiarity of events made the settlers assured enough to adopt local names. The complex Khoikhoi language with its unfamiliar sounds and clicks could not be adequately 'captured' in Dutch writing. The Dutch therefore adapted this strange idiom to fit their pronunciation, thus incorporating these groupings within the VOC realm.

As settlers began to 'bond' with this unfamiliar territory, they made up names for certain landmarks instead of using indigenous names. A new name could signify a shape or characteristic or refer to their homeland; the Orange River, for example, honoured the Dutch Prince

⁴² Grevenbroek J.G., "An elegant and accurate account", in Schapera – Farrington (eds.), *The Early Cape Hottentots* 283.

⁴³ Leibbrandt H.C.V., *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope, letters despatched from the Cape, 1652–1662*, vol. III (Cape Town: 1900) 239–240.

of Orange. The 1707 expedition undertaken by master gardener Jan Hartog recorded both Khoikhoi and Dutch names. For instance the Palmiet River was in the native tongue *Koutema* and the Swarte River was known to the Khoikhoi as *Doggha kamma* (Palmiet is a palm tree, Swarte means black).⁴⁴ Recording native names helped the VOC officers at the Cape as well as their local interpreters to understand which parts of the land the expedition had encountered. Each expedition party kept a journal and produced maps of the terrain. Charts with distinctive landmarks and their names helped the VOC to retrace the steps of previous expeditions. The collected and charted knowledge was subsequently copied and circulated, making the geography of a distant district 'readable', familiar, and manageable for the other VOC departments.

Name-giving as a 'middle ground' accommodated the exchange of information regarding the land and the 'other'. For the Dutch it was a way to come to terms with the Cape's geography and its inhabitants. With a growing familiarity with the land, its people and their language, the Dutch began to adopt native names. In a way the settlers treated the Cape like a worldly Adam by naming places, plants, and people.⁴⁵ Reversely, the natives entered the middle ground armed with their knowledge of Dutch and used it to define their claim. The middle ground accommodated for information and goods to go both ways.

To give a name to a territory means that a certain group claims it as theirs. However, when two parties have difficulty understanding each other it becomes difficult to exchange information. This is what happened in 1657, when a large group of locals encountered three Dutchmen on expedition. The diary of Van Riebeeck reports that these 'Hottentots' clarified that 'these lush pastures [was] their Holland or Fatherland, as to explain to us the fertility of these splendid meadows.'⁴⁶ The Dutch named it 'Hottentots Holland'. The misunderstanding regarding the name 'Hottentots Holland' occurred with the Khoikhoi using their limited knowledge of Dutch to claim it. They tried to create a verbal middle ground to make settlers understand that

⁴⁴ Stock J.L.W., "The Diary of a Cattle Expedition among the Hottentots in 1707", *The English Historical Review* 31 (1916) 610–622.

⁴⁵ Drayton, *Nature's Government*. See for renaming of plants: Wijnands D.O. – Wilson M.L. – Toussaint van Hove T. (eds.), *Jan Commelin's monograph on Cape Flora* (Cape Town: 1996); Scholtz J. Du P., *Naamgeving aan Plante en Diere in Afrikaans, bydrae tot 'n geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse woordeskat* (Nasou: 1974).

⁴⁶ Bosman – Thom, *Dagregister*, vol. 2, 135, see the entry of 6 June 1657.

this pastureland belonged to the Khoikhoi. It is, however, uncertain if the Khoikhoi did indeed use these words. It is also possible that this was the Dutchmen's interpretation of what the locals hoped to make clear. The attempts to construct a middle ground and a mutual understanding led to creative miscommunication by the Dutch. From the 1670s the name Hottentots Holland began to appear on maps and in texts with a distinct focus on its natural richness. It turned into a Dutch stake rather than an indication of a Khoikhoi claim.

The aspiration to cultivate more land grew steadily. In March 1670, Van Riebeeck informed the VOC that they were 'unanimous in their decision' to put the fertile grounds of Hottentots Holland under the plough, which would benefit the settlers and the Company's ships. In his resolution, Van Riebeeck failed to mention the natives, thus verbally removing them from their pasture. In December 1671, land surveyor Mr. Wittebol and a few other 'able folk' received orders 'to inspect the situation and the cultivation of the lands', and to make a chart for the benefit of the VOC centres in Amsterdam and Batavia.⁴⁷ Both in words and in drawings, Hottentots Holland fell into the hands of the Dutch. Not only could the Dutch depend on a stronger network of trade and communication, but the nomadic Khoikhoi groups were not always present to oversee the grounds that they had claimed as theirs.

The Dutch dependency on the locals diminished just as rapidly as the marginalization of the Khoikhoi intensified.⁴⁸ The natives saw their pastures changed into plantations and vineyards on returning to their grounds after one or two years. They protested against the ongoing agricultural subjugation, but the map of 1692 [Fig. 5] shows that the Company kept its fences up and persuaded the nomads to move to other pastures, since they were mobile.⁴⁹ The farming frontier had become a reality that pushed them further and further inland. In order to maintain their nomadic lifestyle they had to choose between either trekking further inland or adapting to colonial farming. The

⁴⁷ *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of Cape of Good Hope*. Reference code: C. 7, 1 December 1671.

⁴⁸ See for instance the tension signalled in the book review by Guelke – Guelke, "Imperial Eyes on South Africa" 11–31.

⁴⁹ Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the founding of White South Africa* 124 ff. The Khoikhoi ceded Hottentots Holland in May 1672. Also: Guelke – Shell, "Landscape of Conquest" 803–824.

strong Dutch ways of representation overpowered the native ways of the Khoikhoi, and plough and paper took over the common ground.

Conclusion

The VOC had entered a vast wilderness that they eventually changed into a neatly organized garden. Commercial goals invigorated this exploitation of the Cape. As ‘discoverers’ and ‘gardeners’ of this seemingly empty land the Dutch considered it to be politically and economically theirs. They generated a food surplus and accumulated knowledge for the Company’s commercial benefit. In the first years, they still depended on Khoikhoi knowledge, goods, and practices, in exchange for Dutch merchandise. This motivated the construction of a middle ground where the negotiations between the settlers and the Khoikhoi took place.

The Khoikhoi originally ‘owned’ this land through their nomadic ways. Although not always willingly they shared their experience and knowledge of the land and its nature with the Dutch and used their oral network to ascertain land claims and information. The Dutch, on the other hand, relied on a continuous production of documents, deeds, and charts to further their commercial enterprise and manage the Cape settlement. Paper and the plough made the Dutch network more powerful than that of the Khoikhoi. Contained as reports, journals, and travelogues, Cape knowledge circulated to various centres of accumulation, and to date, these written accounts are witnesses of this commercial conquest. However, we should adjust the image of Europe as the ‘scientific’ or ‘technological’ driving-force in so-called feral areas and of the Dutch as taking possession of a seemingly vacant land in order to cultivate both nature and people.⁵⁰ Dutch adaptation of local knowledge and practices was part of the agricultural subjugation, which progressively pushed the original inhabitants into the periphery. The traces of the Khoikhoi and their network on the Cape land were once visible, but have since long, to use Mentzel’s words, been dispersed by the pounding waves of the tidal flows of the VOC seas.

⁵⁰ Bank A., “The Great Debate and the Origins of South African Historiography”, *The Journal of African History*, 38, 2 (1997) 261–281, discusses the ‘vacant land myth’ and the Dutch justification of colonization.

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A BADLY HARVESTED FIELD:
THE GROWTH OF LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE AND
THE DUTCH CAPE COLONY UNTIL 1796

Hans den Besten

Introduction

The rapidly expanding Dutch Cape Colony founded in 1652 brought Europeans into closer contact with Khoesan languages (popularly also known as “the click languages”)¹ and – from the 1770s onward – also with Bantu languages, more specifically with Isi-Xhosa and Se-Tswana.

Since the Cape settlement was founded in, and for over a century was expanding into, Khoesan territory it is not surprising that Cape colonial linguistics of the VOC period was almost exclusively Khoesan linguistics – in fact almost exclusively Khoekhoe linguistics. After all, Khoekhoe (‘Hottentot’) was the language of the indigenous people the colony and its settlers had to deal with it on a day to day basis: the Khoekhoen (‘Hottentots’), while for many decades the San (or ‘Bushmen’) were successful in trying to stay out of the reach of the colony.

It should be noted, though, that the VOC was not really interested in ‘Cape colonial linguistics’. Furthermore – as the Lords XVII (the VOC Directorate) expressed on at least one occasion – they felt that the Khoekhoen should learn Dutch rather than the Dutch learning Khoekhoe. And so no money was spent on linguistics, while botanical studies were actively promoted.

Consequently, Cape colonial linguistics was work done by linguistic laymen, who followed their own agendas and who sometimes made

¹ The grapheme <oe> in Khoesan represents a diphthong [ɔɐ]. Since Europeans usually perceive this as [ɔi] Khoesan is often written Khoisan. Similarly for Khoe(khoe) (‘Hottentot’, the language) and Khoe(khoe)(n) (‘Hottentots’, the people). [I have a preference for the reduplicated stem and the common plural marker -n.] Also note that the name Khoesan is a hybrid ‘compound’ invented by outsiders. This juxtaposition of Khoekhoen and San (a Khoekhoe word for Bushmen) may make sense from an anthropological point of view, it does not from a linguistic point of view, since Khoekhoe is just one of the Central Khoesan languages.

use of the postal services of the VOC to get their data to Europe. One of those men was Johannes Wilhelmus de or van Grevenbroek (henceforth Grevenbroek), who is supposed to have sent two vocabularies and three texts translated into Khoekhoe to the gentleman-scholar Nicolaas Witsen in Amsterdam. The latter forwarded these fruits of Grevenbroek's research to the German scholars Job Ludolf and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

This may sound exciting for an historian of ideas or an historian of linguistics but here the story more or less ends: we owe Leibniz and Ludolf's biographer Christian Juncker the publication of Grevenbroek's Khoekhoe materials but that is about it. We don't know of any publication by Ludolf or Leibniz (or a contemporary) on the linguistic properties of Khoekhoe. Therefore – and because more people were involved – the present paper will deal on the one hand with the descriptive properties of the various documents that have come down to us and on the other hand with certain mysteries surrounding some of these documents. As will become clear in the course of this paper Grevenbroek's authorship of the documents published by Juncker and Leibniz is an interpretation of the facts. The actual documents are anonymous.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that a language is more than its lexis: words may have a morphological structure and words may combine into phrases and sentences – even though there are also one word sentences such as *Go!* and one word phrases such as *elephants*. Therefore, we need morphological and/or grammatical remarks (level 3); and if these are absent at least a couple of sentences and/or phrases (level 2), and if these are absent at least some words that consist of more than one morpheme (level 1). And if even such data are absent we are at level 0 in so far as grammar is concerned. As we will see below, level 3 data are restricted to exactly one remark, while level 1 data are presented in an unsystematic way and level 2 data can hardly be found in the various glossaries that have come down to us, which changed a bit in the course of the 18th century. Fortunately, there are the anonymous 1697 texts (which we will attribute to J.W. Grevenbroek)² as well as the sentences in Kolb's 1719 ethnographic

² Leibniz G.W., *Collectanea etymologica, illustrationi linguarum, veteris Celticae, Germanicae, Gallicae aliarumque inservientia* (Hannover, Nicolaus Förster: 1717) 375–384.

description of the Khoekhoen.³ But unfortunately, these level 2 data are of a doubtful quality.

For practical and socio-historical reasons the VOC period, which runs from 1652 until 1796, can best be divided into two sub-periods of linguistic activity separated by an *intermezzo* of linguistic silence. The first sub-period runs from 1652 until ca. 1730 and the second one from ca. 1770 until 1796. The 'silent' *intermezzo* most probably reflects the rapid decline of Khoekhoe in the Western Cape area and in neighbouring areas colonized by the *trekboere*. During the second half of the 18th century, however, the rate of expansion was so high that many Khoesan-speaking groups were incorporated (or sometimes only surrounded) that did not immediately give up their languages. This more or less explains why linguistic activities were resumed after 1770.

As I already pointed out above, the quality of Cape colonial linguistics during the VOC period is weak in the field of grammar. Unfortunately, the representation of clicks (which belongs to the field of phonology) is also weak, although there is some progress in the second period. Progress in the field of grammar had to wait until the period of the Batavian Republic as I will show in a Postscript.

The two sub-periods of the Dutch VOC-period will be treated consecutively with most attention for the first sub-period, due to a number of mysteries that have to be solved. The order of discussion will be more or less chronological, since there was not yet an academic discipline studying the properties of the Khoesan languages that might have yielded issues around which an article could be construed. The two historical sections will be preceded by a general selection on two linguistic issues we will encounter in the course of this paper (section 2).

Finally, I would like to point out that the present paper owes much to G.S. Nienaber's work on Cape Khoekhoe and early Nama (Khoekhoegowab) and Korana.⁴ It was Nienaber who dismissed the myth that Juncker (1710) had (re)published Wreede's *compendium*. Nienaber analyzed the ways in which the 17th and 18th century documents represent the Khoesan click sounds and he discovered that Grevenbroek may have been the author of the documents published by Juncker and Leibniz. My own contribution mainly pertains to issues having to do

³ Kolb P., *Caput Bonae Spei hodiernum, das ist: Vollständige Beschreibung des Africanischen Vorgebürges der Guten Hofnung* (Nuremberg, Peter Conrad Monath: 1719) 348, 363, 411, 417, 427, 579.

⁴ Nienaber G.S., *Hottentots* (Pretoria: 1963).

with Cape Dutch Pidgin, Khoekhoe syntax, the Ludolf documents of 1691 and 1695, and Kolb's *Caput Bonae Spei hodiernum* (1719).

Two additional issues

In his book entitled *Caput Bonae Spei hodiernum* (The present Cape of Good Hope) Peter Kolb spends a full chapter on the question of whether Khoekhoe can be learned and can be written.⁵ After many detours he finally reaches the conclusion that – yes, indeed – Khoekhoe can be learned – witness the presence of settlers who can speak that language natively (and in spite of his own inability to learn the clicks). He is more cautious as regards the second question, since the Roman alphabet does not seem to have enough symbols to represent the click sounds. So, new letters or characters are needed.⁶

However, inventing new characters is only one option. It is also possible to borrow characters from other alphabets or to give superfluous symbols (e.g. <c>, <q> and <x>) a new function or to define combinations of characters as graphemes for clicks. Furthermore, there is the option of marking existing characters with diacritics, while mixed solutions are also possible of course. And the Swedish naturalist Thunberg invented yet another way to represent clicks, as we will see in section 4 below. Anyway, this very basic issue will be a recurring feature in about all of the subsections that will follow.

What Kolb probably was not aware of is that some of the words he and others considered to be Khoekhoe actually are Cape Dutch Pidgin. My impression is that the Khoekhoen when serving as consultants used simplified Khoekhoe, a kind of Khoekhoe foreigner-talk, into which pidgin words could be freely inserted.

It goes without saying that I will also pay attention to the three levels of grammatical information mentioned in section 1.

⁵ Kolb, *Caput* 347–364. This is the first ‘letter’ of the second part of the book.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 357.

The first sub-period

The following seven sections will deal with Wreede and his *Compendium*, ten Rhyne's remarks on Cape Dutch Pidgin and Khoekhoe, two anonymous authors, Grevenbroek, Valentyn, Kolb, and Büttner. This number of eight authors can be reduced to four, since the two anonymous authors may be one and the same person, i.e. Grevenbroek, while Kolb and Valentyn can be argued to have copied a handwritten vocabulary composed by Grevenbroek. In order to further structure my historical semi-narrative, I will distinguish the forerunners (Wreede and ten Rhyne), the texts of the 1690s and the production of the first quarter of the 18th century. Furthermore, the part of the early 18th century will provide arguments for the assumption that Grevenbroek may be the author of the anonymous documents of the 1690s.

The forerunners: Wreede (1663/1664) and ten Rhyne (1673)

Although Jan van Riebeeck interspersed his voluminous writings with a few Khoekhoe words he never produced a Khoekhoe vocabulary. Shortly after van Riebeeck's period, however, the new commander of the Cape settlement, Zacharias Wagenaar, sent a manuscript with a vocabulary composed by the soldier Georg Friedrich Wreede, to the Lords XVII in the Netherlands. In the accompanying letter, of 21 November 1663, Wagenaar states that Wreede, a former student and a native of the land of Brunswick, had arrived as a midshipman in 1659. He had developed an interest in Khoekhoe and he had progressed so much in his knowledge of that language that not only had he been able to serve as an interpreter every now and then but,

he also has now endeavoured to put to paper a vocabulary or compendium as he calls it, comprising the Dutch, and the Hottentotic language (which he for the time being is expressing with Greek letters), which work he is now respectfully dedicating to your honours, trusting that – if your honours consider this good and useful – you will then have the same printed and published and will send some copies over.⁷

⁷ 'maer heeft hem oock nu onderwonden een vocabulaer off compendium soo hy 't noemt behelsende de Nederduytse & Hottentoose taele (die hy voor eerst met Griexse letters exprimeert op 't Pampier te brengen,) welck werck hy als nu UEd. hier nevens Reverentie comt dediceren met vertrouwen dat soo wanneer UEd. sulcx

In their letter of 29 April 1664 the Directors of the Chamber of *Middeburg* state:

We have received the compendium or vocabulary of the Hottentot language, made by Georgius Fredericus Wreden and at your suggestion we have consented to have it printed and to send you some copies thereof with these or the next ships.⁸

Wreede was to receive a bonus of 100 rixdollars and should be promoted to the rank of assistant or sergeant,⁹ in spite of the fact that they preferred for the local inhabitants to learn Dutch rather than the Dutch learning their language.¹⁰ This is slightly at variance with a note concerning a *Compendium off vocabulaer in de Hottentose taele* (Compendium or vocabulary in the Hottentotic language) in Landwehr's bibliography of publications relating to the VOC: according to the *Resolutien* of the *Heeren XVII* the board decided on 1 May 1664, to have the *Compendium* printed.¹¹

Unfortunately, Wreede's *Compendium* is lost. Some believe it never was printed but in that case there should be a resolution to that effect. Maybe somewhere something went wrong: the book was forgotten and stayed in Holland, or there was a shipwreck, or the ship carrying the booklet was made prize of by privateers, or the book accidentally was

voor goet en dienstich achten tselve alsdan door den druck wel sullen laten gemeen maecten en eenige Exemplaren daer van herwaerts aensenden.' For the full quote see Godée Molsbergen E.C., *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse tijd*, vol. 1: *Tochten naar het Noorden 1652–1686* (The Hague: 1916) 215. Note that the right bracket should follow 'exprimeert'. The adjective Hottentoots (Hottentotic in the translation) derives from the noun Hottentot, the original form of the word Hottentot.

⁸ 'Het compendium off vocabulaer van de Hottentotsche taele by Georgius Fredericus Wreden gemaect, hebben wij ontfangen en op Ul. voorstel goedgevonden te laten drucken en eenige exemplaren daarvan met dese off volgende schepen Ul. toe te senden' (Boeseken A.J., *Dagregister en Brieven van Zacharias Wagenaer 1662–1666* (Pretoria: 1973) 186, n. 47). Moodie's translation and Godée Molsbergen's paraphrase are incorrect. Moodie translates: '[...] we have had it printed' (Moodie D., *The Record or, A Series of Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa* (Cape Town: 1838; reprinted Amsterdam – Cape Town: 1960) 279) and according to Godée Molsbergen Wreede's compendium had been received and printed ('[...] dat Wreede's compendium ontfangen was en gedrukt [...]'). Cf. Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 215ff.

⁹ More on Wreede's VOC career can be found in the pertinent biographical sketch in Schoeman K., *Kinders van die Kompanjie: Kaapse lewens uit die sewentiende eeu* (Pretoria: 2006) 114–124. Also see Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 215–216.

¹⁰ Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 215; Moodie, *The Record* 279.

¹¹ Landwehr J., *VOC: A Bibliography of Publications Relating to the Dutch East India Company 1602–1800*, ed. P. van der Krogt (Utrecht: 1991) 455.

not delivered at the Cape and disappeared in Colombo or Batavia, etc. etc. Further archival research may shed light on this issue.

Most probably the printed *Compendium* never reached South Africa, since there is not the slightest trace of a writing system for Khoekhoe words involving the use of Greek characters. Had there been such a tradition among the learned at the Cape Willem ten Rhyne, who called at the Cape in 1673, would most probably have come across it. But his list of *Hottentottonica* and his list of Khoekhoe numerals (see below) contain not a single Greek character,¹² while ten Rhyne was not averse of using Greek script in his Latin treatise.¹³

In spite of the above a quick search on the Internet demonstrates that it is widely believed that Wreede's vocabulary is available in print. This is due to the fact that in 1916 Godée Molsbergen republished the Khoekhoe materials of Juncker (1710) (for which see below) under the heading *G.F. Wreede's Hottentotse Woordelijst* (G.F. Wreede's Khoekhoe vocabulary).¹⁴ Isaac Schapera's influential publication on the Cape Khoekhoen underscored this misunderstanding by stating:

The manuscripts of the [= Wreede's] vocabulary are no longer preserved in the Archives of either Holland or the Cape. It is generally believed that they were lent to the historian Ludolf and never recovered, for in a biography written of him by Christian Junker and published in 1710 there is a long Dutch-Hottentot-Latin vocabulary whose source is not mentioned, but which is now universally attributed to Wreede.¹⁵

However, Godée Molsbergen and Schapera got it wrong: in Juncker's book we find two vocabularies, neither of which mentions *vocabulaer* or *compendium* in its title.¹⁶ Furthermore, not a single Greek letter can be

¹² Most probably Wreede used Greek characters to represent the clicks.

¹³ Schapera I. (ed.), *The Early Cape Hottentots Described in the Writings of Olfert Dapper (1668), Willem ten Rhyne (1686) and Johannes Gulielmus de Greevenbroek (1695)*. The original texts, with translations into English by I. Schapera and B. Farrington (Cape Town: 1933) 84, 94, 98, 136, 148.

¹⁴ Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 215–224.

¹⁵ Schapera, *Early Cape Hottentots* 3. There was an American reprint of this book in 1970 (Newport, CT.: 1970). As far as I know, Ludolf is better known as an orientalist.

¹⁶ The respective titles are: *Eenige Hottentotse Woorden* (Some Hottentot words) and *Hottentotsche Taal, gebruyckelick by de Natien, op en omtrent de Caab de goude Hoop* (The Hottentot language in use among the nations which live at and near the Cape of Good Hope). Cf. Juncker C., *Commentarius de vita scriptisque ac meritis illustris viri Jobi Ludolfii [...]. In appendice adiectae sunt tum epistolae aliquot clarorum virorum, tum etiam specimen*

detected. In view of the absence of such graphemes combined with the absence of the word *compendium* it is highly unlikely that these vocabularies can be attributed to Wreede. Furthermore, we expect one list, not two.

Be that as it may, even though Wreede's *Compendium* seems to be lost forever, we should at least try to learn more about its fate. And maybe an unorthodox search in archives other than those in Cape Town and The Hague will yield more than that.

In 1673, Willem ten Rhyne – a medical doctor on his way to the East Indies – called at the Cape. More than ten years later he sent a Latin extract of his diary, which dealt with the Cape Colony and the Khoekhoen, to Gasper Sibelius of Goor, a physician in his home town Deventer. On 24 February 1685 the latter forwarded it to a colleague in Schaffhausen (Switzerland), where it was published in 1686.¹⁷

Important for the present article is ten Rhyne's chapter XXVII, *De lingua eorundem* (About their language).¹⁸ As I have shown elsewhere¹⁹ this chapter does not really concern Khoekhoe but rather Cape Dutch Pidgin, which is described in terms of the components of its lexicon: many words from Dutch, to which the Khoekhoen very often add the suffix *Kom* [sic: *om*],²⁰ not many roots from Khoekhoe, which the Khoekhoen enrich with epithets, and a few words from English. Unfortunately, the 'Khoekhoe' root that is given as an example, *Courcour*

linguae Hottentotticae, nunquam alias ad notitiam Germanorum perlatae (Leipzig – Frankfurt, Johann Friedrich Braun: 1710) 229–232. Cf. the modern edition: Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 215, 218.

¹⁷ Ten Rhyne W., *Schediasma de Promontorio Bonae Spei; ejusve tractus incolis Hottentottis, accurante, brevesque notas addente Henr. Screti S. a Zavorziz* (Schaffhausen, Johann Martin Oswald: 1686). For more details see Schapera, *Early Cape Hottentots* 84, and den Besten H., "The manuscript underlying Ten Rhyne's Schediasma de Promontotio bonae spei: a comparison of two versions", *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 61, 4 (2007) 33–45. Ten Rhyne (1686) was republished in Schapera, *Early Cape Hotentots* 78–157, with a translation by B. Farrington.

¹⁸ Schapera, *Early Cape Hottentots* 152–157.

¹⁹ Den Besten H., "Die niederländischen Pidgins der alten Kapkolonie", in Boretzky N. – Enninger W. – Stolz Th. (eds.), *Beiträge zum 3. Essener Kolloquium über Sprachwandel und seine bestimmenden Faktoren vom 30.9. – 2.10.198[6] an der Universität Essen* (Bochum: 1987) 9–40.

²⁰ Ten Rhyne is confusing suffixes with word-final syllables. Thus only his first example, 'tabaqkom' 'tobacco', ends in '-kom', which is a syllable, while 'tabaqkom', 'kortom' 'small share' and 'horom' 'to hear', share the suffix (or clitic) '-om'. The claim that almost all (lat. omnia ferme) words taken from Dutch end in '-kom', i.e. '-om', is blatantly false. In the pidgin text fragments in Chapter XX of ten Rhyne's *Schediasma* (Schapera, *Early Cape Hottentots* 140) only 5 out of a total of 53 (mainly Dutch) words end in '-om' (or its variant '-me').

‘bird’, is not a Khoekhoe appellative but a Dutch onomatopoe. Yet, the principle of differentiation by means of epithets is clear, e.g. *Grotom Courcour* ‘big bird’, ‘ostrich’.²¹

This short linguistic introduction is followed by a list of “Mere Hottentotonica, quae obiter occurrunt”, “Purely Hottentot words which sometimes show up [...]”, a very short list of “Corrupta Belgica” “Broken Dutch words” and a list of Khoekhoe numerals.

The list of (six) numerals is precious evidence for an archaic pentadic counting system, which at the time was in the process of being replaced by a decimal system, as Nienaber has shown.²² The two other lists evidence some ‘inaccuracies’. Thus, at least three of the *Hottentotonica* are pidginisms: ‘Aqua’ ‘horse’,²³ ‘Boeba’ ‘ox or cow’ and ‘Debitja’ ‘young bulls’,²⁴ while two words in the list of “Corrupta Belgica” are khoekhoeisms: ‘Karos’ ‘cloak’ and ‘bi’ ‘drink, milk’ (written as ‘bier’ ‘beer’).²⁵ The remaining *Hottentotonica* as well as the numerals though being part of the pidgin, are also evidence for Khoekhoe but the clicks are weakly represented, if at all.²⁶

These two properties – the listing of pidgin words in Khoekhoe vocabularies and the weak representation of clicks – will constitute recurring themes for the remainder of this paper.

²¹ Recently I have argued that a pidgin adjective + -om may be indicative of a sentence: e.g. *grotom Courcour* may be ‘big-he_i [the] bird_i’, i.e. ‘the bird is big’ (den Besten H., “Relaxification and pidgin development: The case of Cape Dutch Pidgin”, in Ansaldo U. – Matthews S. – Lim L. (eds.), *Deconstructing Creole* (Amsterdam – Philadelphia: 2007) 141–164.

²² Nienaber, *Hottentots* 166–178.

²³ ‘Aqua’ (elsewhere ‘haqua’, ‘hacqua’, etc.) is the frozen masculine plural of the Khoekhoe name for a specific kind of zebra or quagga, which the Dutch in vain hoped they could domesticate. An alternative name was du. ‘wild paard’ ‘wild horse’ (> afr. *wildeperd*), or just ‘paard’ ‘horse’. Such ‘horses’ were first made mention of in March 1658. The Khoekhoe name appears in December 1660: Haqua (Bosman D.B. – Thom H.B., *Dagregister gehouden by den oppercoopman Jan Anthonisz van Riebeeck* (Cape Town: 1952–1957) vol. II, 267, 460 and vol. III, 308). Whether van Riebeeck knew that Haqua was a plural is not clear. However, in the pidgin the plural *ha+gu+a* has been reanalyzed as a nominal stem: *hakwa*.

²⁴ ‘Boeba’ is an extended form of du. ‘boe’ ‘moo’, and ‘Debitja’ probably is a transcription error for ‘*Debiesa’ (elsewhere ‘Dwiessa’, ‘tibesa’ < du. ‘de’/‘die’ ‘the/that’ + du./afr. ‘bees(t)’ ‘(bovine) animal’).

²⁵ Kh. ‘Karos’ ‘cloak’ is mistaken for a semantic corruption of du. ‘karos’ ‘carriage’, and ‘bi’/‘bier’ is part of a pun that ten Rhyne could not grasp.

²⁶ E.g. ‘Ouka’ ‘wolf [= hyena]’ should start with a dental click. The same is written with a <t> in ‘Tem’ ‘two’, which in the absence of a diacritic will be incorrectly understood as the dental stop [t].

Finally note that the number of lexical elements presented by ten Rhyne is too small to provide us with morphological (or: level 1) information.

Contact with the Republic of Letters in the 1690s

While European colonists were struggling with ‘exotic’ languages, linguists in Europe started to develop an interest in such languages, partly for their own sake and partly for comparative linguistic purposes.²⁷ Two of such linguists, to wit the orientalist Job Ludolf and the polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, contacted the Amsterdam gentleman-scholar Nicolaas Witsen, who was willing to help. In the same period the Cape intellectual J.W. Grevenbroek made use of the postal services offered by the VOC to dispatch a Latin treatise on the Khoekhoen and the Ama-Xhosa to a friend in Amsterdam. This treatise was ethnographic, of course, but it contained some linguistic information.

Witsen, Ludolf and an Anonymous Author (1691 and 1695)

In 1691, five years after the publication of ten Rhyne’s booklet, the Amsterdam burgomaster and future VOC director Nicolaas Witsen sent a Khoekhoe vocabulary to the German orientalist and father of modern Ge’ez studies, Job Ludolf. In 1695 this happened again. The two vocabularies – together with two Latin letters by Nicolaas Witsen, a Dutch document-cum-Latin-translation on religious beliefs among the Khoekhoen, and a “Praefatio” (Preface) – were published in Appendix II of Ludolf’s biography written by Christian Juncker (1710).²⁸ For

²⁷ Cf. Aarsleff H., “Section 1. Leibniz”, and section “The eighteenth century, including Leibniz”, in Sebeok Th.A. (ed.), *Current trends in linguistics*, vol 13: *Historiography of Linguistics* (The Hague – Paris: 1975) 385–410; Haarmann H., “Die großen Sprachensammlungen vom frühen 18. bis frühen 19. Jahrhundert”, in Aroux S. – Koerner E.F.K. – Nedereche H.-J. – Versteegh K. (eds), *History of the Language Sciences. An International Handbook on the Evolution of the Study of Language from the Beginnings to the Present*, vol. I (Berlin – New York: 2000) 1081–1094; and Groenewald G., “To Leibnitz, from Dorha: A Khoi prayer in the Republic of Letters”, *Itinerario* 27,1 (2004) 29–48.

²⁸ Juncker, *Commentarius* 227, 229–237.

ease of reference I will call these vocabularies the Ludolf documents,²⁹ and their author(s) – who in view of the very similar orthographies must be one and the same person – will be indicated as L. A juicy little detail in this respect may be that apparently Ludolf had been ‘sitting on his data’, because – according to Juncker – the existence of these documents had not been known to anybody.³⁰

Originally these anonymous vocabularies must have been bilingual (Dutch – Khoekhoe) but Juncker has added a Latin column.³¹ However, there are several flaws in the Latin column. Thus ‘Harte beesten’ ‘harte-beests’ (lit. ‘hart animals’) was translated as ‘Dura animalia’ ‘hard animals’ and ‘een Snaphaan’ ‘a flintlock’ was interpreted as lat. *latro* ‘robber’.³² A few entries such as ‘de pramme’ ‘the breasts’ and ‘Yser’ ‘iron’ were left open because they were not amenable to guesswork. Juncker couldn’t help it that the author made use of typical Cape Dutch (Afrikaans) terminology such as ‘Wolf’ ‘wolf’ for ‘hyena’ and ‘een Zeekoei’ ‘a sea

²⁹ Nienaber, *Hottentots*, mistakenly attributes both vocabularies to 1691. However, there are two letters by Nicolaas Witsen referring to Khoekhoe materials. In a letter dated The Hague, 16 December 1691 Witsen says: ‘Nil mihi ultimae naues Indicae adportarunt [read: adportaverunt], praeter vocabula aliquot Hottentottica, quae heic habes’ (‘The last ships from India have brought me nothing but some Hottentot words, which you receive herewith.’) In a letter dated Amsterdam, 4 January 1696 Witsen says: ‘Gaudeo te valere et grata fuisse, quae de lingua Hottentottica misi [...]’ (‘I am glad that you are well and that what I sent you of/about the Hottentot language has been welcome [...].’). The latter letter sounds like a reply to a letter of thanks by Ludolf. So Witsen must have sent another Khoekhoe vocabulary to Ludolf in 1695, which explains why there are two vocabularies in Juncker’s *Commentarius* instead of one. Cf. Juncker, *Commentarius* 227.

³⁰ At the end of the “Praefatio” Juncker states: ‘Igitur persuasi fuimus, operae pretium nos facturos, siquidem hae scriptiones ad eruditorum notitiam ex chartis LVDOLFIANIS perferantur, praesertim cum nemini hactenus, quantum quidem nobis constat, quidquam de iis fuerit cognitum’ (226) (‘So we are convinced that we will be doing something worthwhile when these [handwritten] documents are brought from Ludolf’s papers to the attention of the learned, especially because until now – in so far as we know – nobody knew anything about them.’)

³¹ That it was Juncker and not Ludolf to whom we owe the Latin column can be derived from the last paragraph of the “Praefatio”: ‘[...] in gratiam eorum, qui linguam Batauam non callent, interpretationem vocum latinam adiecimus’ (‘[...] on behalf of those who do not know Dutch we have added a Latin translation of the words’) (Juncker, *Commentarius* 226). The subject of this quote (‘we’) cannot be Ludolf because the “Praefatio” is referring to Ludolf in the third person: on p. 225 (‘ad Nobilissimum IOBVM LVDOLFFVM’ – ‘to the very famous Job Ludolf’; ‘Amicum illum LVDOLFI’ – ‘that friend of Ludolf’s’) and again on p. 226 (‘ex chartis LVDOLFIANIS’ – ‘from the Ludolfian [=Ludolf’s] papers’). Therefore, the ‘we’ of the ‘Praefatio’ must be the author of the book, Christian Juncker.

³² ‘Dura animalia’ on account of germ. ‘harte’ ‘hard (inflected)’ (vs. du. ‘harde’) and ‘latro’ ‘robber’ on account of germ. ‘Schnapphahn’.

cow [= a walrus]' for 'a hippopotamus'.³³ So the Latin translations – quite understandably – were 'Lupus' 'wolf' and 'Vacca marina' 'sea cow, walrus' respectively.

This having been said a few words are in order about the pertinent Dutch–Khoekhoe vocabularies as such. First of all, they are thematically organized but there are no headings such as 'Animals', 'Nature', etc. Furthermore, the thematic blocks are sometimes broken up through associative flashes. As in the case of ten Rhyne a few pidginisms have been incorporated into these Khoekhoe vocabularies: 'Dwiessa'_A 'ox' and 'Hackwa'_A / 'hacqua'_B 'horse'.³⁴ Furthermore the lexical information is such that we seem to be able to extract some morphological (level 1) information from that.³⁵ But the information provided is unsystematic: a bit of natural gender but no number oppositions, so that the rich system of person-gender-number markers for nouns cannot be detected.³⁶ Furthermore, it is rather difficult to establish whether a 'long' noun is a compound or not.

As regards the clicks the composer of these two vocabularies is applying a couple of graphemic tricks: <t> plus interspacing as in 't houqua'_A 'wolf [= hyena]', <k> plus interspacing as in 'k' auw'_B 'fish', <qu> as in

³³ Boshoff S.P.E. – Nienaber G.S., *Afrikaanse etymologieë* (Pretoria: 1967) point at related words of the sea-cow type in English, French, Neolatin and German. Most probably the Latin expression vacca marina is much older, since it can be found in *Der Naturen Bloeme* (1270), a rhyming encyclopedia of natural history by the Middle Dutch author Jacob van Maerlant, as a quick search on the internet taught me. Godée Molsbergen – who has the annoying tendency to ridicule Juncker's Latin (as well as his limited knowledge of Dutch) while not criticizing the same 'mistakes' in Kolb's Latin – does not seem to be aware of the status of neolat. vacca marina. He simply calls it a 'literal translation'. Cf. Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 216, 222.

³⁴ Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 216 and 216, 220 respectively. A subscript A / B indicates that the word is quoted from the first, or the second vocabulary respectively. – Note that the Dutch column of the first vocabulary usually – and also in these two cases – quotes animal names in the plural, while the corresponding word in the Khoekhoe column is in the singular. Therefore, the plural translation of Dwiessa and Hackwa in the first vocabulary is irrelevant for the discussion: the second vocabulary translates hacqua with an indefinite singular in spite of its 'evident' plural morphology. Furthermore, 'Dwiessa' is a variant of pidg. du. 'de bees(t)' 'the bovine animal' (du. 'beest', afrikaans 'bees') – and one may wonder whether 'Goudie'_A / 'hoedie'_B 'sheep (plural)' and 'a sheep' respectively isn't a frozen feminine plural comparable to the frozen masculine plural 'Hackwa' / 'hacqua'.

³⁵ E.g. on the basis of 'Zohee' 'a man' and 'Zohees' 'woman' (Juncker, *Commentarius* 230) we might conclude that -s is a feminine (singular) marker – which is correct.

³⁶ See e.g. Rust F., *Praktische Namagrammatik, auf Grund der Namagrammatiken von H. Vedder und J. Olpp* (Cape Town – Amsterdam: 1965) for these so-called pgn-markers, and Nienaber *Hottentots* for the same in Cape Khoekhoe.

*qu'ein*_b 'the liver', etc.³⁷ However, Nienaber could not detect any system in the use of these graphemes – at least in comparison with the clicks of Nama (Khoekhoegowab).³⁸

Now notice that these two vocabularies have been preserved in yet another version, a manuscript with again three columns, but this time with a third column in German. It is kept in the Moravian archives in Herrnhut, Germany, as part of a portfolio with the title *Acta die Reise des Georg Schmidts nach Cabo de Goede Hoop betreffende: Anno 1736* (Documents concerning Georg Schmidt's voyage to Cabo de Goede Hoop [= the Cape of Good Hope]: Anno 1736).³⁹ Georg Schmidt was the first Moravian missionary to be sent to South Africa to start a mission among the Khoekhoen.⁴⁰

Given the description of yet another manuscript version of these vocabularies, also kept in the archives in Herrnhut,⁴¹ we know that the translator was the Dutch author Isaac le Long, which explains certain peculiarities of the German translation.⁴² Most probably le Long made his translation on the basis of the edition in Juncker's *Commentarius*.

Grevenbroek's Letter of 1695

In 1695 Grevenbroek, who had resigned as the secretary of the Cape Council of Policy in 1694, sent a long letter on the Khoekhoen written in laborious Latin to a friend in Amsterdam, a clergyman apparently,

³⁷ Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 216, 220, 219). Note that in Godée Molsbergen's edition the word-internal spaces have been removed. Nienaber, *Hottentots*, which is quoting directly from Juncker, *Commentarius*, retains such spaces.

³⁸ Nienaber, *Hottentots* 120, 122.

³⁹ Letter of 14 January 1994 by Ms. I. Baldauf, curator.

⁴⁰ He soon had to give up (1744), due to strong opposition from the local white inhabitants.

⁴¹ Shelf number NB.VII R.3 209b: "Hottentottische Wörtersammlung" – and between bracket: Abschrift von Alexander Glitsch nach der Abschrift von Isaac Le Long (Transcript by Alexander Glitsch after the transcript by Isaac Le Long). This version consists of a German column in alphabetical order followed by two columns for the respective vocabularies. I owe a copy of this manuscript to Jerzy Koch.

⁴² Le Long often uses an -en plural instead of an -e plural, e.g. Schiften 'ships'. He hypercorrectly translates du. 'Zee' 'sea' in 'Zee-Leeuw' 'sea lion' and 'Zee-Koeij' 'sea cow' with germ. 'Meer' instead of germ. 'See'. A few nouns have the wrong gender, e.g. 'Ein Kugel' 'a bullet' (masculine or neuter) instead of 'Eine Kugel' (feminine).

whose name is not known. This 'letter', which – witness its edition in Schapera's *Early Cape Hottentots* – is longer than ten Rhyne's treatise,⁴³ deals not only with the Khoekhoen but also with the Magosi, i.e. the Ama-Xhosa. A lot of his information on the Ama-Xhosa he must have obtained from a young Frenchman, called Guillaume Chenut, who – after a shipwreck – had lived for a couple of years among the Ama-Xhosa and who claimed to have learned their language pretty well.

Grevenbroek mentions that he had – most probably with Chenut's help – drafted a Xhosa vocabulary, which is lost, unfortunately. What is left is a collocation that is supposed to express the concept of *ship*: 'Caye Mansine',⁴⁴ names like 'Magosi',⁴⁵ and a list of numerals (1–10, 20, 30) with a list of corresponding numerals from Khoekhoe. Since the Xhosa and Khoekhoe forms do not show any similarity, Grevenbroek wonders what their origins might be. Whether he would have understood and maybe even liked the present-day answers in terms of separate macro-phyla and two migrations that brought Xhosa and Khoekhoe together in the East Cape is something one can only speculate about.

As for the linguistic data as such, one thing is clear (and not surprising): Grevenbroek's treatment of the clicks (Khoekhoe) is somewhat shaky.⁴⁶ On the other hand, a comparison of Grevenbroek's Xhosa with modern Xhosa shows that young Chenut may have learned a dialect that dropped word-initial vowels, which may very well be genuine.⁴⁷

⁴³ Schapera, *Early Cape Hottentots* 158–299.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 280, 282.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 220, 222, 280.

⁴⁶ 'Chiu' '1' [read: chui] and 'kham' '2' both start with the dental click. This does not seem to be reflected in the spelling of these two words. Secondly, 'nhona' '3' and 'nanni' '6' both start with a nasalized alveolar click. This may be indicated by <nh> in 'nhona', while 'nanni' does not seem to indicate a click.

⁴⁷ E.g. 'Caye mansine', which derives from 'i-kaya emanzine' 'house on the water [= ship]'. Similarly for Seine 'vel' [= 'or'] Mane '4', which could derive from 'ezi-ne' and 'ama-ne' respectively. Cf. Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, footnotes 93 and 95 and Fischer A. – Weiss E. – Mdala E. – Tshabe S., *English – Xhosa dictionary* (Cape Town: 1985) and Louw J.A. – Jubase J.B., *Handboek van Xhosa* (Johannesburg: 1978).

Witsen, Leibniz and an Anonymous Author (1697)

In 1697 Nicolaas Witsen sent new Khoekhoe materials to the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz – this time translations of three basic texts of Christianity: the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments (long version), and the Nicene Creed. In 1717 they were published (together with texts in other languages provided by Witsen and together with some of Witsen's letters to Leibniz)⁴⁸ as chapter VII of part II of Leibniz's posthumous *Collectanea etymologica*.⁴⁹ In this context one should take notice of the first half of an excerpt from a letter by Nicolaas Witsen that accompanied the Khoekhoe texts:

Since I see that you wish to have the *Pater Noster* in languages of distant countries I am taking the liberty to send you a hand-written document in *Hottentot* with the *Credo* and the *Decem Praecepta*, as well as the *Pater Noster* in *Mongolian*, which I have – with great difficulty – pulled out of a Mongolian slave who is with the mission of Moscovia. If there are other foreign nations among them, I'll try to learn their *Pater Noster* as well.⁵⁰

In order to be able to do comparative linguistics and etymology (in search of remnants of the aboriginal 'Adamic' human language) Leibniz wanted to collect the *Lord's Prayer* in as many different languages as possible. Apparently his consultant in the Cape Colony (henceforth T) didn't think that was enough and added the Ten Commandments and the Nicene Creed.⁵¹

The three texts are presented as interlinear translations from Dutch into Khoekhoe, with an optional third line for notes concerning

⁴⁸ Witsen corresponded with Leibniz in French, and with Ludolf in Latin.

⁴⁹ Leibniz, *Collectanea*. Leibniz died in 1716. For his *Collectanea etymologica*, see Groenewald, "To Leibnitz, from Dorha. The Khoekhoe texts can be found on pp. 375–384. Unfortunately, the original has disappeared during the second World War (e-mail of 12 December 2006 by Prof. Herbert Breger, curator of the Leibniz-Archiv).

⁵⁰ Leibniz, *Collectanea* 361: 'Comme je vois, que vous desirez d'avoir le Pater Noster en des Langues de Pais éloignez, je prens la liberté de vous envoyer un Ecrit en Langue Hotentote avec le Credo & Decem Praecepta, de même que le Pater Noster en Langue Mogale, le quel j'ay tiré avec beaucoup de peine d'un Mogal Esclave, qui est avec l'Ambassade de Moscovie. S'il y a d'autres Nations Etrangères parmi eux, je tâcheray d'apprendre aussi leur Pater Noster. [...]'. Instead of 'Pater Noster' Leibniz himself has a preference for the more distanced Latin expression 'Oratio Dominica' 'Lord's Prayer' (e.g. on p. 63 of his book).

⁵¹ If T is indeed Grevenbroek this detail fits. Grevenbroek was known for his somewhat ostentatious devout Christianity.

problems of translation. Note markers in front of the problematic Dutch words refer to these notes.

Following the Lord's Prayer there is a short postscript of 18.5 lines in Dutch in which T spends ca. 5.5 lines on the problems dealt with in the notes, 11 lines on the clicks and ca. 2 lines on the absence of words for 'Maar' 'but' and 'Want' 'for, because' in Khoekhoe (which has to be qualified, see below). Furthermore, a *Nota* after the Ten Commandments discusses two Khoekhoe animal names and a *Nota* after the Nicene Creed returns to the problems of translation.

The 11 lines about the clicks indicate that <k?> and <t?> represent clicks.⁵² The phonetic description of the clicks is not very helpful, though, since the clicks are not differentiated. Furthermore, the distribution of the click signs seems to be unsystematic, as Nienaber has established.⁵³ Now note that the graphemes <k?> and <t?> are reminiscent of the click graphemes employed in the Ludolf documents (also without much systematicity) and that both in the Ludolf and in the 1697 documents there may be a word-internal interspace immediately after the click grapheme. Furthermore, the overall orthography of the new texts is reminiscent of the orthography of the Ludolf documents.⁵⁴ So, the two anonymous authors, L and T, may be one and the same person.

From a linguistic point of view these translations are a big step forward because they may tell us something about word order in Cape Khoekhoe (so level 2 data). Yet, we have to be on our guard: T is often translating phrase by phrase, also within phrases, which does not necessarily lead to acceptable Khoekhoe sentences. In fact, T's remark about the absence of words for 'maar' 'but' and 'want' 'for [= because]'⁵⁵

⁵² T does not say anything about <t'>, <k'> and the single case of <g'>, but we may safely assume that these graphemes represent clicks as well.

⁵³ Nienaber, *Hottentots* 122–123.

⁵⁴ E.g. the grapheme <ou> for the [u] sound, the syllable-initial grapheme <ch> for [x] and the abundant use of <qu>. These are loan graphemes in Dutch orthography. They derive from French, Greco-Latin and Latin borrowings respectively. French <ou> had a strong position in 17th century Dutch spelling, especially for representing non-European words, and it could even be used in native Dutch words. Greco-Latin <ch>, however, had to compete with Dutch <g>, even though the latter was also necessary to express the voiced velar stop [g].

⁵⁵ The sole instance of level 3 data during the whole VOC period (at least in so far as the indigenous languages of South Africa are concerned): 'Ook zyn de vvoorden Maar en Want by haar in geen gebruyk, en sulx onbekend' ('Furthermore the words But and For are not in use among them, and unknown [as] such') (377).

demonstrates that T did not know much about complex sentences in Khoekhoe. Generally speaking, if a language is lacking coordinators such as *but* and *for* adverbs can be used instead or otherwise subordinators (*although*, *because*). Subordinators in Khoekhoe, however, have to be put at the end of the subordinate clause. So 'want uwe is dat Koningryk' 'for yours is the kingdom' (376), which T 'translates' as '-t? aats kouqueetsa'⁵⁶ could have been something like 't? aats kouqueetsa chuige', with *chuige* 'because'.⁵⁷

Yet, there are a couple of things in these texts that are good Khoekhoe, such as the use of postpositions as in 't? homme ingá' 'heaven in [= in heaven]' or the use of pre-nominal unmarked possessive phrases as in 'haque hacqua' 'that man donkey [= his donkey]'.⁵⁸ But T's consultant may have fooled him a little in that he made use of simplified or adapted Khoekhoe. Evidence for this assumption may be the use of 'hacqua' 'horse, donkey' and 'haque' 'that man [= he]'. T knew that *hacqua* was a new word but apparently he did not know that it was a pidginism.⁵⁹ Nor did he recognize 'haque' 'that man' as a pidginism.⁶⁰ Note that 19th century Korana (an offshoot of Cape Khoekhoe) called a (male) horse 'hāb', which is genuine Khoekhoe, and used the pronominal stem //éi- for the third person pronouns (as in Nama).⁶¹ Therefore,

⁵⁶ Note that '-t? aats kouqueetsa' actually means: '- you the king are' rather than '- you the kingdom have'.

⁵⁷ Rust, *Praktische Namagratematik*.

⁵⁸ Leibniz, *Collectanea* 375, 381.

⁵⁹ The 'Nota' after the Ten Commandments states: 'Hacqua beduýd een tam paard by de Hottentots onbekend, en 'twoord d'au betekend een wilden Esel of paard in een en deselve naam; zynde een rast [= vast? HdB] bewýs, dat sý voor d'Europeanen geen paarden gesien hebben.' (p. 382) That is: 'Hacqua means a domesticated horse – which is unknown among the Hottentots – and the word d'au means a wild donkey or horse in one and the same noun; [this] being firm proof that they have not seen any horses before the Europeans.'

⁶⁰ Other examples: (a) 'ha queena' 'those people [= them]' referring to other beings (than God) that may not be venerated (Second Commandment, 377), (b) 'hà que' 'that man's [= his]' referring to 'Thoró Bo' etc. 'God [the] Father etc.' in the Nicene Creed (382). – 'Que(e)' is the Khoekhoe noun stem 'khoe-' 'person' and '-na' is '-n', the common plural marker, + '-a', the dependent case marker. Cape kh. 'que(e)' as an unmarked noun is masculine singular in the nominative. Nominative phrases are used as subjects ('that man' > 'he') and as possessors ('that man's' > 'his'). For the latter, see Rust, *Praktische Namagratematik*.

⁶¹ Wuras C.F., *Vokabular der Korana-Sprache, herausg. und mit krit. Anm. versehen von W. Bourquin* (Berlin- Hamburg: 1920; reprint Nendeln, Liechtenstein: 1969). It is actually //éi- in modern Nama (Khoekhoegowab) but before the 1977 spelling reform this element was also written //éi-.

the idea of a simplified – or at least adapted – Khoekhoe may be on the right track.⁶²

*Collectors and Copiers: Grevenbroek and Büttner, Valentyn and Kolb
(Early 18th Century)*

In a relatively short period at the beginning of the 18th century three men collected data on Cape Khoekhoe: the Dutch protestant minister François Valentyn, the German astronomer, later: VOC employee, Peter Kolb, and the German surgeon and VOC employee, Johann Daniel Büttner. For two of them collecting data meant copying somebody else's information: in 1705, during a stopover at the Cape, Valentyn copied data from a manuscript he had borrowed from J.W. Grevenbroek, and Peter Kolb, who was at the Cape from 1705 until 1713, is supposed to have done the same. Büttner collected some data between 1712 (his year of arrival) and 1716 (year of his manuscript).⁶³

Valentyn published the transcribed data in the fifth, 'South African' part of his 1726 book on the East Indies.⁶⁴ Kolb incorporated the Khoekhoe data into his well-known *Caput Bonae Spei hodiernum*.⁶⁵ Büttner's data was not published until the 20th century.⁶⁶ Since Büttner (ms., 1716?) was only limitedly available until 1970, I will not discuss it or its primitive system of diacritics.⁶⁷ But it should be noted

⁶² Groenewald, "To Leibniz, from Dorha" surmises that T's consultant may have been the Chainouqua chieftain Captain Dorha, also known as Captain Claas ('Captain Nick' so to speak). For a biographical sketch of Dorha see Schoeman, *Kinders* 317–346.

⁶³ 1716 is a reconstruction. Cf. Nienaber G.S. – Raven-Hart R., *Johan Daniel Büttner's Account of the Cape. Brief Description of Natal. Journal Extracts on East Indies* (Cape Town: 1970) 6–8.

⁶⁴ Valentyn F., *Beschryvinge van de Kaap der Goede Hoop met de zaaken daar toe behoorende* (Amsterdam: 1726) ed. E.H. Raidt, English translation R. Raven-Hart, (Cape Town: 1973), 76–94.

⁶⁵ Kolb, *Caput* 360–364. For the Dutch translation of Kolb's *Caput Bonae Spei hodiernum* see Kolb[c] P., *Naaukeurige en Uitvoerige Beschryving van De Kaap de Goede Hoop... waarby een Beschryving van den oorsprong der Hottentotten...*, 2 vols (Amsterdam, Balthasar Lake-man: 1727).

⁶⁶ Cf. Nienaber – Raven-Hart, *Büttner's Account* 40–41. – The manuscript as we have it is an extract made by Joachim N. von Dessin after Büttner's death in 1730. Nowadays it is part of the Dessinian collection in the National Library of South Africa, Cape Town.

⁶⁷ I.e. (1) ^: indicates the presence of a click. (2) ^^: indicates the presence of a nasalized click. (3) °: indicates nasalization of the vowel. Cf. Nienaber – Raven-Hart, *Büttner's Account* 40 and Nienaber, *Hottentots* 138, 163.

that Büttner's list contains ten sentences as well as six two- or three-word Noun Phrases (so level 2 data).

As for the two other authors, Valentyn's vocabulary is preceded by two lists of numerals, one for the people 'Landwaart in' 'in the interior' (Xhosa) and one for the people 'Aan 't Kasteel' 'near the castle' (Khoekhoe). Despite some transcription mistakes these two lists look very much like the lists of numerals in Grevenbroek (ms., 1695), which is hardly surprising. Valentyn's vocabulary is thematically organized: animals, birds, water animals ('fishes'), body parts, human beings, other things, and verbs – in sum 199 entries. The entries are bilingual: Khoekhoe – Dutch, although the entry 'Söu, een Kom of Kop; olla' with latin *olla* 'pot' at the end⁶⁸ suggests a trilingual (Khoekhoe – Dutch – Latin) original.

Kolb's vocabulary is differently organized. It is trilingual: Latin – Khoekhoe – German, and its 203 entries are alphabetically ordered on the basis of the Latin entries (with a considerable number of ordering mistakes). The vocabulary is followed by a discussion of the numerals in Khoekhoe.

Kolb and Valentyn's vocabularies look as if they are completely different documents – due to a couple of formal differences such as the application of different ordering principles, Valentyn's substitution of Dutch <oe> for 'French' <ou>, and Kolb's ubiquitous use of the tilde as a click marker – sometimes in positions where it should not appear at all.⁶⁹

Now note that Kolb is insinuating that he is producing an improved version of the Ludolf documents as published by Juncker in his *Commentarius* (1710),⁷⁰ which in a sense is true, because 178 entries of Kolb's vocabulary share information with entries in the documents published by Juncker. However, 170 out of those 178 entries can also be found in Valentyn's vocabulary. Since Valentyn states that he made use of a manuscript by Grevenbroek we have to conclude that the anonymous author of the Ludolf (and 1697) documents is the same person as

⁶⁸ Valentyn, *Beschryvinge* 88.

⁶⁹ Thus 'Nombha' 'beard' (elsewhere 'nomma'; lat. 'barba'), with the masculine singular marker '-ma'/'-bha', gets a tilde over '-ha', although gender-number markers don't contain clicks. Also the click in de Dutch loan 'bak~kerie' 'pitcher' (< du. 'beker' 'mug'; <~> straddling <kk>) is curious to say the least.

⁷⁰ Kolb, *Caput* 360.

J.W. Grevenbroek.⁷¹ Given internal evidence Grevenbroek must have collapsed, corrected and expanded his 1691 and 1695 vocabularies. It is this new manuscript that Valentyn borrowed and copied.

However, it can be proven beyond any doubt that also Kolb based his vocabulary upon Grevenbroek's manuscript. First of all, there are 21 entries shared by Kolb and Valentyn that can not be found in Juncker's *Commentarius*. Secondly, wherever Valentyn innovates with respect to Juncker, Kolb sides with Valentyn.⁷² Furthermore, in case of variation between the two Ludolf documents Valentyn and Kolb choose the same variant.⁷³ And finally, in most cases where Valentyn systematizes the somewhat erratic use of nominal number in the Dutch (and Latin) translations in Juncker (1710) Kolb sides with Valentyn – even in the case of a ‘mistake’, such as *ghoedie* / *g~houdie* (<~> over <h>) ‘sheep (feminine plural)’, which is translated as ‘a sheep’.⁷⁴

Therefore, Kolb's claim that he had made use of Juncker's *Commentarius*, had corrected the mistakes in the Latin translations, had added what else he could find in his notes, had inserted his click marker (the tilde), and had added German translations,⁷⁵ seems to be three quarters of untruth and one quarter of truth: he has indeed added a German column to the vocabulary, has corrected (and expanded) the Latin column, and has inserted the tilde, which gives his vocabulary an (undeserved) scholarly appearance. But the rest seems to be plainly besides the truth. I agree with Nienaber that this is quite annoying but I would like to argue that there is also a grain of truth inside the untruth, since Kolb's Latin column definitely follows the Latin of Juncker (1710), but for the mistakes, which have been corrected.⁷⁶

⁷¹ This is basically Nienaber's argument (*Hottentots* 126–131), although I have reorganized the argumentation. The counts are mine.

⁷² Thus they both correct ‘drief’ ‘wine’ (< du. ‘druif’ ‘grape’) as ‘driefbi’, i.e. ‘grape drink’ (with du. ‘druif’ and kh. ‘bi’ ‘drink’); cf. Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 217, Valentyn, *Beschryvinge* 88, Kolb, *Caput* 363. And they copy the same scribal error for the pidginism ‘dwiessa’ ‘oxen’: ‘durie-sa’ ‘an ox’ (Valentyn) and ‘durié-sá’ ‘id.’ (Kolb); cf. Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 216, Valentyn, *Beschryvinge* 80, Kolb, *Caput* 360.

⁷³ E.g. ‘Tgamma_A’ ~ ‘Chamma_B’ ‘lion’, becomes ‘Chamma’. Cf. Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 216–220, Valentyn, *Beschryvinge* 78, Kolb, *Caput* 362.

⁷⁴ Kolb, *Caput* 448 quotes ‘Hacqua...ein Pferd [= a horse]’ and ‘Ghoudie, oder Schaaf [= or sheep (singular)]’ (with <~> over the <h>) as names of Khoekhoe men. So for him ‘ghoudie’ was a singular. Cf. note 34.

⁷⁵ Kolb, *Caput* 360.

⁷⁶ E.g. ‘latro’ ‘robber’ > ‘bombarda’ ‘flint lock’ – ‘dura animalia_A’ / ‘durum animal_B’ ‘hard animal(s)’ > ‘cervus’ ‘hart’. Cf. Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen* 221, 216+221 vs. Kolb, *Caput* 360, 361, respectively.

Thus Kolb sticks to the Cape Dutch (Afrikaans) animal names such as ‘Lupus’ ‘wolf’ (hyena) or ‘Vacca marina’ ‘sea cow, walrus’ (hippopotamus); and he keeps the expression ‘Bos gestans onus’ ‘ox carrying a burden’ (pack-ox), although ‘Bos gestatorius’ would have been better.⁷⁷ Therefore, even though Kolb used Juncker’s *Commentarius* as a smokescreen, he did work on and with it. Yet, it is strange that he believed he could freely quote from (his personal copy of) Grevenbroek’s manuscript and get away with it.

But there is yet another point that needs clarification: Kolb’s (undifferentiated) click sign, the tilde. His argument for the need of such a sign runs as follows. Talking about Juncker’s *Commentarius* he claims i.a.:

[...] yet, nowhere does one see a sign about the question of whether and what kind of click with the tongue should be made with them [= the words sent to Ludolf].⁷⁸

One may wonder whether he really believed that. If so that would imply that Kolb did not recognize Grevenbroek’s graphemes for clicks, and that therefore he must have had the same negative opinion of Grevenbroek’s manuscript, which he had copied in South Africa. Furthermore, Kolb is slightly inconsistent in that he does not specify which clicks should be produced either. Most probably however this is part of Kolb’s ‘bragging’. And it was certainly also part of his scheme to cover up his plagiarism.⁷⁹

Finally it should be noted that we also owe Kolb a couple of Khoekhoe sentences (level 2 data), whether they are his own data or Grevenbroek’s. These are standard greetings, mainly.⁸⁰ However, the quality of these sentences – especially the sentences used in rituals (Kolb P., *Caput* 411, 427) – is doubtful.

Conclusion Concerning the First Sub-Period

The first sub-period (1652 until ca. 1730) is confusing due to various mysteries. Some of these were unnecessary: Nicolaas Witsen could

⁷⁷ Similarly for ‘Natio Hottentottica’ and ‘Natio Germanica’, where ‘Hottentotti’ ‘the Khoekhoen’ and ‘Germani’ / ‘Belgae’ ‘the Dutch’ would have been enough.

⁷⁸ ‘[...] allein man siehet nirgend ein Zeichen darüber, ob und was vor ein Schlag mit der Zunge dabey müsse gemacht werden’ (Kolb, *Caput* 360.)

⁷⁹ For a recent study on Kolb, see Good A., “The construction of an authoritative text: Peter Kolb’s description of the Khoikhoi at the Cape of Good Hope in the eighteenth century”, *Journal of Early Modern History* 10 (2006) 61–94.

⁸⁰ Kolb, *Caput* 348, 363, 411, 417, 427, 579.

have mentioned Grevenbroek's name in his letters to Ludolf and Leibniz (but he never mentioned the names of his consultants, so it seems) and Kolb could have been more open about his sources. (To be fair: also ten Rhyne should have disclosed his sources.) And – finally – Godée Molsbergen should not have created even more confusion by attributing the Ludolf documents to Wreede.

Now, if we restrict ourselves to Khoekhoe, we seem to see a large set of names: Wreede, ten Rhyne, Grevenbroek, Witsen, Ludolf, Juncker, Leibniz, Büttner, Kolb and Valentyn. But only four out of these ten count as researchers of Khoekhoe: two minor luminaries, ten Rhyne and Büttner, and two major ones, Wreede, whose work may be forever lost and Grevenbroek, whose work could only survive due to others: his early vocabularies have been preserved thanks to Witsen, Ludolf and Juncker, his translations survived thanks to Witsen and Leibniz and his integrated and expanded vocabulary was more or less saved by Valentyn and Kolb.

So around 1720 the following published sources were available: ten Rhyne's *Schediasma* (1686), Juncker's *Commentarius* (1710), Leibniz's *Collectanea* (1717) and Kolb's *Caput Bonae Spei hodiernum* (1719), and less than a decade later followed Valentyn's *Beschryvinge* (1726) and the Dutch translation of Kolb's book (1727). Together with the vocabulary published in 1658 by Étienne de Flacourt, who had collected his data at Saldanha Bay, at a time that this natural harbor was still outside the Cape settlement area (1655),⁸¹ this could have been a good start for some orientalist to write learned essays on Khoekhoe. Ludolf and Leibniz may have considered this possibility but it never materialized. However, travellers may have used copies of the lists that can be found in the above-mentioned publications. Le Long's translation of the Ludolf vocabularies, which can be found in the Herrnhut archives may be evidence for this function of the vocabularies.

⁸¹ De Flacourt É., Chap. XXV: "Langage des Sauvages de la Baye de Saldaigne an [sic : au] Cap de Bonne Esperance.", in de Flacourt É., *Dictionnaire de la langue de Madagascar: avec un Petit recueil des... Plus quelques mots du langage des sauvages de la baye de Saldaigne au Cap de Bonne Esperance...* (Paris, Georges Iossé: 1658) 55–61.

The Second Sub-Period

After the intermezzo (ca. 1730–ca. 1770) two types of language researchers can be distinguished: visiting naturalists, to wit: Carl Peter Thunberg, Anders Sparrman and François le Vaillant, and colonial military officers: Robert Jacob Gordon and Franz Carl Philip Freiherr [‘baron’] von Winkelmann. Thunberg and Sparrman were admitted as physicians, while le Vaillant was sent to the Cape Colony to do research. Since no philological problem has to be solved, I will deal with these scholars in the order mentioned. I will not discuss their work in much detail but rather focus upon the beginning of a scholarly treatment of the clicks and upon the rise of a new Khoekhoe word: *hāb* ‘horse’. Furthermore, note that the historical and sociological context had changed: around 1770 Khoekhoe was practically dead in the western parts of the Cape Colony. But in the East Cape and further to the north there still were considerable numbers of speakers of Khoekhoe – although there too Cape Dutch/Afrikaans was making inroads, since the frontier zone was rapidly moving north and east. Cape Dutch Pidgin was probably loosing ground to early Afrikaans, which had consequences for the occurrence of pidgin words in the vocabularies. And finally there now was relatively wealthy frontier elite, which often could speak some Khoekhoe and was willing to help the travelling scholars.

The Naturalists (1773–1783)

In 1773 Carl Thunberg and his party were preparing for a journey into the Sneeuberg Mountains, at the time still ‘Hottentot’ area. So he took some Khoekhoe lessons. The result was that he could distinguish three click sounds (excluding the lateral click), for which he devised an ingenious way to indirectly represent them: vowels were marked for a click in the onsets of their syllables by assuming a ‘deviant’ size – the ‘standard’ size being reserved for capital letters. Thus a small vowel sign (<a>, <e>, etc.) marked the presence of the dental click, a non-capital vowel in small cap (<A>, <E>, etc.) the ‘palatal’ click, nowadays called the alveolar click, and a small vowel with an acute accent (<á>, <é>, etc.) the ‘guttural’ click, nowadays called the palatal click. He left us a couple of pages with words and short sentences

written this way.⁸² Nienaber – when comparing these data with their Nama cognates – could not detect any system behind the differences in the use of clicks.⁸³

Thunberg's vocabulary starts with an independent Eastern Cape system of numerals. His actual vocabulary contains a few loanwords, among which the pidginism HAKVA, about which more below.

Thunberg's compatriot Sparrman undertook a similar trip to the East in 1775. In the 20th century edition of his travelogue we find about five full pages with *specimens* of three different languages: Khoekhoe, the language of the 'Chinese Hottentots', most probably a Southern Khoesan language, and Khoekhoe-influenced Xhosa.⁸⁴ This means that finally there is interest in non-Khoekhoe Khoesan languages. However, in so far as the representation of clicks is concerned, Sparrman's Khoesan specimens are a great disappointment: Sparrman applies a Grevenbroek-like system: *t'* or *d'* plus a word-internal space – *d'* is occurring only 3 times, *t'* about 86 times.

There are very few loan words in Sparrman's Khoekhoe sample and one of them is a nasalized version of the pidgin word 'haqua': 'Horse', 'Hanqua'.⁸⁵ As I hypothesized above, pidginisms could be borrowed (back) into Khoekhoe, or rather foreigner Khoekhoe.⁸⁶ Sparrman and Thunberg provide us with (level 2) evidence for this assumption: 'Thy

⁸² See the revised English translation of Thunberg's *Resa*, vol. 2 (1789): Thunberg C.P., *Travels at the Cape of Good Hope 1772–1779*, ed. V.S. Forbes (Cape Town: 1986) 232–235. Thunberg's representation of the clicks may be impracticable from an orthographic point of view, but it works.

⁸³ Nienaber, *Hottentots* 43 is confused about Thunberg's system. Assuming that the palatal click is defined by means of capital vowels he has to conclude that capital vowels are ambiguous and consequently he cannot make sense of the use of small cap. But he is right that there is more to the vowels than has been defined. The solutions are simple, though: <è> and <ò> with a grave accent probably are the opposites of <E> and <O> in degree of tenseness, and <AE> is a Swedish grapheme. Nienaber's interpretation of Thunberg's clicks does not retain the articulatory order (dental > palatal > guttural), which in present-day terminology must be dental > alveolar > palatal. Instead of that he equates Thunberg's dental and palatal with modern dental and palatal, so that Thunberg's guttural has to be equated with modern alveolar, which is bizarre.

⁸⁴ Sparrman A., *A voyage to the Cape of Good Hope towards the Antarctic circle round the world and to the country of the Hottentots and the Caffres from the year 1772–1776*, ed. V.S. Forbes, 2 vols (Cape Town: 1977) 263–266, 266 and 267–268 respectively.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 265 also has entries like 'He', 'Hekoe.' and 'They', 'hekoina', i.e. 'that man' and 'those people' respectively, which I interpret as features of Khoekhoe foreigner-talk.

Horse', 'Ta Hanqua',⁸⁷ 'Where is the horse?' – HAKVA DEMMA HA?' [lit. 'Horse, where-[he] is?'], 'Bring the horse hither – HAKVA SEO'.⁸⁸ However, Thunberg also provides evidence that this pidginism was on the way out: 'Horse – HAKVA, HAAP' and 'Mare – HASS'.⁸⁹ The old word for a horse-like zebra or quagga (masculine 'hāb', feminine 'hās'), whose masculine plural had given rise to the pidginism 'haqua' 'horse' apparently was taking over the reading '(domesticated) horse'. Nienaber provides further evidence for this change.⁹⁰

Finally a few words about François le Vaillant, who visited the East Cape in 1782. This naturalist was the first person to devise an (incomplete) system of symbols to represent the clicks: a wedge pointing up followed by a dash, i.e. <Λ–>, to represent the dental click, <V–> to represent the palatal click and <Δ–> to represent the alveolar click. Nienaber is fairly positive about le Vaillant but also in this case a comparison with clicks in Nama leads to mixed results.⁹¹

The Officers

In a sense the military officers Robert Jacob Gordon and Franz Carl Philip Freiherr von Winkelmann do not 'deserve' a mention in this article, since they both did not publish – although we may assume that Gordon was planning to turn his voluminous traveling notes into a book, but his suicide prevented that from happening. Nevertheless, Gordon and Winkelmann belong to the second sub-period.

Gordon undertook large expeditions into the Cape interior, between 1777 and 1786. We know that he recorded words and sentences from Bantu and Khoesan languages. His 'Vocabularies of languages of indigenous Cape peoples' are kept at the Brenthurst Library in Johannesburg.⁹² In so far as I know they have not been edited yet. Gordon is rumored to have been an able speaker of Xhosa and Khoekhoe (whatever his actual level of competence was). But in his notes on the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 265.

⁸⁸ Thunberg, *Travels* 233.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 233–234). HASS is a typo for HAAS.

⁹⁰ Cf. Nienaber, *Hottentots* sub perd.

⁹¹ See Ibid., 146–150.

⁹² Shelf number MS 107/10, according to Raper P. – Boucher M., *Robert Jacob Gordon: Cape travels, 1777 to 1786*, 2 vols (Houghton: 1988) 430.

Khoekhoen from 1779–1780 I cannot find the slightest indication of a click in his numerous Khoekhoe examples.⁹³

The German officer Winkelmann on the other hand, whose Xhosa and Khoekhoe vocabularies have been edited by Nienaber,⁹⁴ visited the East Cape in 1788. Just like le Vaillant before him he developed click symbols, but his solution is reminiscent of Thunberg's system in that he makes use of three sizes, albeit of only one Roman character, x: x (small) seems to represent the dental click, x (small cap) the alveolar and palatal clicks and X (capital) any click whatsoever. Since X is infrequent it may be a sign of ignorance: 'I don't know what I heard.' If this is the right interpretation, Winkelmann's system is weaker than le Vaillant's.

Concluding Remarks

What I have described in this paper is a scholarly enterprise that did not (yet) get off the ground. Nevertheless we can see some progress: Grevenbroek did not really know how to deal with the clicks. Things improved during the second sub-period. However, what really was required, though, was a group of dedicated people that could develop the Khoesan languages (and especially Khoekhoe) for practical purposes. It was due to missionaries like van der Kemp, Tindall and Wuras that Khoekhoe (and Khoesan) studies got off the ground in the 19th century. Therefore, Voßen, in his book on the Khoe (or: Central Khoesan) languages relates the beginnings of Khoekhoe studies to the 19th century, not to the 18th century.⁹⁵

This may have had several causes. The weak representation of the clicks in the various vocabularies may have made these vocabularies of little importance for the Khoekhoeists of the 19th century. Furthermore Cape and East Cape Khoekhoe were separate dialects, more related to Korana and Griqua than to Nama (Khoekhoegowab). Since

⁹³ See Gordon R.J. "Particularités relatives à quelques hordes Hottentottes (ms.: 1779–1780)", in Smith A.B. – Pfeiffer R.H., "Col. Robert Gordon's notes on the Khoikhoi 1779–80", *Annals of the South African Cultural History Museum* 5, 1 (Cape Town: 1992) 8–56.

⁹⁴ Nienaber G.S., "n Ou ongepubliseerde lys van Hottentot- en Xhosawoorde", *African Studies* 19 (1960) 157–169.

⁹⁵ See Voßen R., *Die Khoe-Sprachen. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der Sprachgeschichte Afrikas* (Cologne: 1997), 31.

the Cape colonial dialects have died out, while Korana and Griqua are also near or beyond extinction, the knowledge accumulated during the VOC period has become practically useless.

Postscript

It is ironic that the next substantive steps forward were achieved during the second Dutch period at the Cape (1803–1806), the period of the Batavian Republic. These steps forward were achieved by Hinrich Lichtenstein, a German physician, who accompanied the Dutch colonial authorities on their expeditions into the interior. The results of his linguistic investigations as laid down in two publications in 1808 and 1811⁹⁶ are modest but impressive – despite mistakes, omissions and the like. Four Southern African languages are discussed: Korana (a Khoekhoe dialect related to extinct Cape Khoekhoe), ‘Bosjesmansch’ (a Southern Khoesan language, possibly ‘!Xam’, and two Bantu languages: Isi-Xhosa and Se-Tswana. Per language some grammatical and phonological remarks are made. Furthermore, the languages are compared in terms of lexis and syntax – the latter by means of translations of about twenty basic sentences, which creates opportunities to discover more about the syntax of each individual language. Lichtenstein distinguishes three clicks: <t^{’1}> for the dental click, <t^{’2}> for the lateral click, and <t^{’3}> for the alveolar and the palatal clicks and he is offering an articulatory characterization of these clicks. And last but not least, he had consulted the learned Reverend missionary J.Th. van der Kemp. This is – at least symbolically – the beginning of African linguistics in South Africa.

⁹⁶ Lichtenstein H., “Bemerkungen über die Sprachen der südafrikanischen wilden Völkerstämme nebst einem kleinen Wörterverzeichnis aus den gebräuchlichsten Dialecten der Hottentotten und Kaffern“, in Bertuch F.J. – Vater J.S. (eds.), *Allgemeines Archiv für Ethnographie und Linguistik*, vol. 1 (Weimar: 1808) 259–331, and Lichtenstein H., *Reisen im südlichen Afrika in den Jahren 1803, 1804, 1805 und 1806*, 2 vols (Berlin: 1811–1812).

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EUROPE

WRITING HISTORY IN THE AGE OF DISCOVERY,
ACCORDING TO LA POPELINIÈRE, 16TH–17TH
CENTURIES*

Adrien Delmas

- *And this unknown island, if you find it, will it be mine?*
- *You, the king, are only interested in known islands*
- *I am interested in unknown ones too, when they no longer are*
Saramago¹

On May 4th 1661, Jan van Riebeeck wrote a long letter to the directors of the VOC to assess the ten arduous years he had spent founding and asserting the VOC's domination at the southern tip of Africa. Following the directors' instructions, he had built a fort and created a garden, defended this highly strategic position for trading with the East Indies against enemy European nations and driven the inhabitants of the Cape Peninsula further inland after making the necessary commercial contacts for the colony to survive. In his letter, he listed all these achievements to sing his own praises and to support his application for a new post within the VOC. But amongst these many achievements, one prevails over the others. 'Discovering the hidden things' at the Cape is, in the governor's very words, his biggest achievement and must be his successor's main objective.

You can therefore see how far we, unto the last moment, have endeavoured to discover for the Company, with all possible diligence, the hidden things of this land and how we have already succeeded so far (...) and we hope, which God grant, that our successor may be so fortunate as to discover something for the Company.²

* Translated from the French by Christine Bull.

¹ Saramago J., *Le conte de l'île inconnue* (Paris: 2001) 18.

² Leibbrandt H.C.V., *Precis of the archives of the Cape of Good Hope: Letters despatched from the Cape 1652–1662*, III (Cape Town: 1900) 204.

How was it possible for the European powers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to declare themselves sovereign over other continents? This question now seems difficult to answer, but the contemporaries of the first European voyages to distant places had already found an apparently adequate answer with the notion of 'discovery'. Strangely enough, this notion, which was to shape the reorganization of the world after its opening up from the sixteenth century onwards, has not been the subject of an attentive history. In the 1950s, the Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman (1906–1995) posed this question rather bluntly: 'Columbus is said to have discovered America. What is the meaning of such a statement? Which conditions made such a statement possible?'³ Thanks to his work which concluded that America was not 'discovered' but 'invented',⁴ two certainties were established that opened a discussion about the history of the term. One is that the notion of 'discovery', far from being a rooted and obvious assumption, is on the contrary a semantic and historical construction, both laborious and ambiguous. The dividing line between the known and the unknown has varied from one text to another, from one place to another, from one time to another. Hence it is now possible to discuss these variations in the meaning of the term, as Marcel Bataillon or Wilcomb E. Washburn did in their answer to O'Gorman's work.⁵ The second merit of O'Gorman's work is even more understated. It highlights a question too quickly and wrongly considered as fundamentally 'literary': the role of history writing in the process of European expansion in its first decades. The reverse question – that is the 'impact' of discoveries on the modern writing of history – has been dealt with in several places.⁶ But the history of the historiography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has demonstrated little interest in the political role of histories describing extra-European places.

³ O'Gorman E., *La idea del descubrimiento de América* (México: 1951) 21.

⁴ O'Gorman E., *La invención de América* (México: 1958).

⁵ Bataillon M. – O'Gorman E., *Dos concepciones de la tarea histórica: con motivo de la idea de descubrimiento de América* (México: 1955). Washburn W.E., "The Meaning of 'Discovery' in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries", *The American Historical Review* 68, 1 (1962) 1–21.

⁶ This question of the 'impact' of the discovery of America was first raised by Elliott J.H., *The Old World and the New* (Cambridge: 1970). Peter Burke in particular deals with the consequences of discoveries on the writing of history, in "America and the Rewriting of World History" in Kupperman K.O. (ed.), *America in European Consciousness* (London: 1995) 33–51. One should notice that O'Gorman's work introduces his essay.

This short essay aims at continuing the ‘archaeology of discovery’ started with O’Gorman’s question, shifting the focus to the Northern European appropriation of a term which was already defining the Hispanic domination in America. Between Christopher Columbus, the first ‘discoverer of America’, and Jan van Riebeeck, who emphasized what ten years spent in the Cape of Good Hope in the middle of the seventeenth century had allowed him to ‘discover for the benefit of the Company’, a common thread seems to be uniting various European projects overseas. Yet between the sixteenth century, when the Iberian domination of the Oceans was unchallenged, and the seventeenth century, marked by the stunning arrival of Northern European Nations and the breaking of this monopoly, European expansion drastically changed. Within these upheavals in the competition between empires, the notion of discovery was as much a survivor as a main actor. Whether it was The Netherlands, Britain or France, the new maritime powers sought to appropriate both the term and its implications for themselves.

In order to grasp some of the issues linked to this idea of discovery ‘inherited’ by Northern European nations anxious to go and trade with the most remote areas of the three oceans, we shall focus on the approach suggested by the Huguenot historian Henri Lancelot Voisin de la Popelinière (1541–1608). Largely inspired by his reading of Iberian chroniclers, the Huguenot was to find in the idea of ‘discovery’, the alpha and the omega of a new writing of history, superior in all respects, he said, to what historiographers had done until then. In an even more decisive manner, this fervent defender of French and Dutch colonial enterprises was to endow this notion with a significance going much beyond history writing: the narration of discoveries acted as a guarantor when claiming possessions overseas.

La Popelinière stemmed from a gentry family of Poitou and was by his upbringing a man of letters. He was also a man of action in the purest tradition of the Renaissance humanist ideal: ‘virtue lies in action and not in the empty speculation of books’.⁷ Far from leaving this principle unrealized, La Popelinière committed himself with the pen and the sword to the two main fronts which passed through early

⁷ La Popelinière H.L.V. de, *L’Amiral de France et par occasion de celui des autres nations, tant vieilles que nouvelles* (Paris, T. Périer: 1584) 92r.

modern Europe. Regarding the first one, the Huguenot was to take part in the religious wars which put the Kingdom of France to fire and sword throughout the second part of the sixteenth century. From these civil wars he drew a *Vraye et entière histoire des Troubles* (1571)⁸ and a *Histoire de France* (1581).⁹ Paradoxically, those works earned him the condemnation of his own reformed camp. His co-religionists, offended by the objectivity of the author, did not understand that La Popelinière had defined the historian's ideal as the pure description of facts, with a total disregard for partisan views.¹⁰ 'The aim of any historian is to alter nothing in what he describes.' In 1599, he developed this demand in his *Histoire des Histoires*, a miscellany of technical, theoretical and programmatical considerations, aimed at reforming and recreating the writing of history.¹¹

The other cause which La Popelinière embraced, perhaps even more than the religious wars, was the involvement of France in the maritime enterprise which was opening up the world. In his books dealing with maritime matters, he urged his co-citizens to participate in, pursue and go beyond the way opened by the Iberian nations a few decades before. His second book on navigation, *L'Amiral de France* (1585) repeats the plea that had opened *Les Trois Mondes* (1582):

As for the aim of my project, I have set myself no other goal than to make our grand-nephews hear about the wonders of God's judgments

⁸ La Popelinière H.L.V. de, *Vraye et entière histoire de ces derniers troubles, advenus tant en rance qu'en Flandres et pays circonvoisins, comprise en dix livres* (Cologne, A. Birckmann: 1571).

⁹ La Popelinière H.L.V. de, *L'histoire de France, enrichie des plus notables occurances survenues ez provinces de l'Europe et pays voisins [...] depuis l'an 1550 jusques à ce temps* (La Rochelle, H. Abraham: 1581).

¹⁰ On the controversy caused by the publication of his book, see Gilmont J.-F., "Les premières éditions des ouvrages historiques de La Place et la Popelinière", in Peter R. (ed.), *Le livre et la Réforme* (Bordeaux: 1987) 119–152.

¹¹ La Popelinière H.L.V. de, *L'histoire des histoires, avec l'idée de l'histoire accomplie. Plus le dessein de l'histoire nouvelle des François* (Paris, P. Mettayer: 1599). Reprinted in 2 volumes in Paris by Fayard in 1989 (the references refer to this later edition). About this book and La Popelinière's theoretical contribution regarding historiography, see Huppert G., *L'idée d'histoire parfaite* (Paris: 1972) 141–156. La Popelinière expresses his project in the following words: 'Thus the only and simple desire to make the truth and condition of history known, in a totally different way which until now I believe to have been discovered by our predecessors' (2, 2). 'I wanted, before producing my History, to show, in an essay form, that no era or language has presented history as one must and can do' (avant-discours).

in the discovery of the East and West Indies, by the strangest effects that nature has ever made: and together with the laudable bravery of the Italians, Portuguese and Spaniards, who were so strangely bold as to expose themselves to so many deaths, [I will describe] the poor poverty of the Frenchman who has not until now dared to attempt such a commendable nor similar enterprise. The fact is that I hardly reveal the pain I had in collecting so many speeches and to split them up into three books, that I expect nor hope for any reward, whether I should or could get it. I will only ask to gather the spirits and courage of the French too often asleep under the veil of life's pleasures to organize any distant journey following the example of their neighbours: at least to honour the nation with any generous exploit.¹²

But in the sixteenth century, most of his countrymen had 'only seen the sea in writing'.¹³ Whether La Popelinière became weary that his pleas had been left unanswered or he remembered that 'any real virtue lies in action', the historian also became a sailor. He wanted to 'haunt any sea' and eventually discover some unknown land, particularly the *terra australis* that attracted all his attention and ambition. In 1589, therefore, he was aboard a fleet heading for Brazil under La Richardière's command. However he was never to reach the other side of the Atlantic, either because of seasickness or more likely because he had to return to France to escort an English fleet seized on the high sea.¹⁴

¹² 'Quant au but de mon dessein, ie ne me suis proposé autre fin, que de faire entendre à nos Rières-neuveux les merveilles des iugemens de Dieu en la decouvertes des Indes Orientales & Occidentales, par les plus estranges effets que la nature produit iamais : & avec la tant louable gaillardise des Italiens, Portugais, & Espagnols si curieusement hardis de s'exposer à tant de mors : la pauvre pauvreté du François qui n'a iusques icy osé tenter si louable ny pareille entreprise. Je fais au reste si peu d'estat du labeur que j'ay pris à recevoir tant de discours pour les repartir en trois livres, que je n'en cherche ny espere aucune recompense, soit que je la deusse, soit que je la peusse avoir. Je ne demanderois pour tout, que recevoir les esprits & courage des François trop endormis sous le voile des plaisirs mondains, à dresser quelque loingtain voyage à l'exemple de ses voisins : pour du moins honorer la nation de quelque genereux exploit.' La Popelinière H.L.V. de, *Les Trois Mondes* (Paris, P. L'Huilier: 1582). New edition, with Anne-Marie Beaulieu's introduction and notes, *Les Trois Mondes* (Geneva: 1997) 69. The references refer to this later edition.

¹³ Ibid., 152.

¹⁴ Regarding the journey, see La Roncière C. de, "Les Routes de l'Inde", *Revue des questions historiques* 76 (Paris: 1904) 158. The historian of the French Navy mentions his seasickness as a reason for his failing to complete the journey. Also see Bruneau J.A., *Histoire véritable de certains voyages périlleux* (Niort, Thomas Portau: 1599) 187, which is the only written record of the journey: '[...] & on the way, took two ships heading for Brazil, in which there were many types of goods suitable for that country [...],

Unwilling to give up, la Popelinière wrote on January 4th, 1604, to Joseph Justus Scaliger, his friend and compatriot who had succeeded Lipsius as the director of Leiden University. Sure that a trip to a foreign land would enhance his work as an historian, he informed him of his wish to board a VOC ship.

That is why, unhappy that nobody in our time undertakes such a big enterprise, I am informing you of my desire to go there and carry it out, if and in any way you will find it useful. I mean, if there is a way to get along with your Dutchmen who are said to go [in the East Indies] every twelve months at around this time of the year. Since I believe that you have good connections with them and want to use them in favour of your friends for the improvement of letters, and also that those Gentlemen in Leyden only do what you wish, begging the Statesmen to welcome a man of honour who might be of some use to them in the way they see fit.¹⁵

As far as we know, the favour was never done, either because Scaliger did not have the expected connections within the very young VOC,¹⁶ or the Company, which usually recruited volunteers for distant seas among traders rather than among historians, remained deaf to the argument, according to which:

A judicious man could gather [in the East Indies] some marvelous things if he had the means to afford the cost of going there, coming, buying, writing, painting, engraving and preparing himself for the return journey.¹⁷

part of which they loaded on their ships: and sent one of the ships with the Lord de la Popelinière, who boarded the journey because he wanted to see this country’.

¹⁵ ‘C’est pourquoy, fâché qu’aucun de nostre temps n’entreprend si hault affaire, je vous communique mon desir d’y aller pour l’effectuer si et comme vous le trouverez bon. J’entens, s’il y a moyen de s’accommoder avec vos Hollandois qu’on dict y aller d’an en an et environ ce temps. Joint qu’il m’est incroyable que vous n’ayez bonne cognoissance avec eux, et moins encor que vous ne la voulussiez departir en faveur des lettres à vos amys, et mesmes que Messieurs de Leyden n’y fissent ce que desireriez, prians Messieurs les Estats d’y recevoir quelque homme d’honneur qui leur pourroit servir en ce qu’ils le voudroyent employer.’ Scaliger J.J., *Epistres françoises des personages illustres*, vol. II (Amsterdam, De Reves: 1624) 70, 303–307.

¹⁶ We are grateful to Dirk van Miert, who guided us through Scaliger’s correspondence and according to whom this assumption of a lack of connection between the University and the VOC is still the most likely.

¹⁷ Scaliger, *Epistres françoises*.

We can therefore assume that La Popelinière never set foot on a ship again. He remained convinced, however, as he wrote in his letter to Scaliger, that,

For judgement to be the most noble and useful part of man, nothing other than travel and the careful observation of foreign countries can build it, so that we get nearer to the perfection of history.¹⁸

The intuition that travelling is at the root of a 'perfect history' which made La Popelinière anxious to sail for distant places through all of his life, found its best expression in *Les Trois Mondes*, a book he published in 1582. It is an attempt to account for all the 'discoveries' either in his time or in the most distant centuries, and represents his first try at creating a new way of writing history, with an explicitly universal vocation. While 'collecting so many speeches' on past and present journeys, he was faced with the problem of getting access to the documents which recorded those narratives.

It has been a few years since the English [Francis] Drake, having sailed round the Earth, returned to his country, [...] Queen Elizabeth, [...] however, keeps the diaries of his navigation so that they are not published. I do not doubt that many convinced her to keep such instructions so that they are not communicated to foreigners or not even to her own subjects. But I do not know if they are right to do so: since communication can only be in the honour of her nation, if they are such that other peoples can derive a benefit or some commodities from them.¹⁹

The practice of secrecy surrounding European knowledge of other continents – decreed from Seville to Amsterdam and more or less efficiently applied²⁰ – could not but shock La Popelinière's humanist spirit. The author replies to this practice with a totally selfless consideration. On the horizon of these journeys to the four corners of the world, an ideal started taking shape where all the knowledge, freely published and shared, would constitute the common good of an accomplished

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 400.

²⁰ A summary on the issues of secrecy regarding information about navigation to distant places is yet to be done. Regarding Portugal, see Cortesão J., *A política do sigilo no Descobrimentos* (Lisboa: 1960). For The United Provinces, see Schilder G., *Monumenta cartographica Neerlandica* (Amsterdam: 1986–2003) or even more recent Zandvliet K., *Mapping for money* (Amsterdam: 1998) 128–130.

humanity.²¹ If, at the time of La Popelinière's words, there was still a long way to go before the world revealed all its secrets, his work is a plea for not stopping half-way.

So much so that if not everybody brings their various and particular observations on the circumference [of the Earth] in order to build, by a careful observation of the most important accidents which will happen before their eyes, a perfect science, dignified pasture of the great mind: we and our grand-nephews, by our own fault, will always live in ignorance. As if we, never going straight, will only fumble here and there and as blind people in the midday sun, cut through a thick darkness with a brutal ignorance.²²

The description of travels is presented as the best way to reach the eschatological horizon where the 'known' world will defeat the 'unknown' world for good. The experience provided by travels, nicely referred to as 'the proof of the eye'²³, becomes the guarantee to 'improve history writing'.²⁴ In order to achieve this, the writing of history should borrow a notion designed by travel narratives – the notion of 'discovery'. La Popelinière's texts give several meanings to this term. It becomes in turn a sailor's word meaning 'to see'²⁵ or a metaphor for what one finds from reading a book.²⁶ La Popelinière, fond of this word, even ends up changing some excerpts from books he plagiarized in order to introduce the concept of discovery.²⁷ But after all, 'discovery' has

²¹ It is also the sense of the tribute he pays to printing, 'an invention to make you and all the peoples discover the most beautiful conceptions of the World instantly'. La Popelinière, *L'Histoire des Histoires* 2, 16.

²² La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 401–402.

²³ Ibid., 87: 'Travellers at that time discovered the Antipodes in this old world, and much enlightened by the proof of the eye, of what the Ancient Greeks and Romans and Christians had only been able to imaginary conceived in their mind.'

²⁴ La Popelinière, *L'Histoire des Histoires* 2, 19.

²⁵ Ibid., 408, speaking about the conflicts between the Spaniards and the Portuguese in the Moluccas: 'The ship sailing ahead was discovered by the Spaniards, and although it was at night, they started firing so powerfully with one of their cannons that their killed a sailor, injured the hand of the pilot holding the rudder and even damaged the rudder itself.'

²⁶ Ibid., 67, in the dedication to Philippe Huraut: 'I foresee that you will suddenly discover (in this book) many things which are just in their beginning.' Or: 'Truth is so natural to History that everyone gives it as a first rule, that it never fears to tell the truth and secondly that it never fears to discover what is wrong' La Popelinière, *L'histoire des histoires* 1, 47.

²⁷ As he is copying Osório's text to narrate Magellan's navigation, he changes 'to see if some passages could be found' to 'in order to discover and represent some passages'. La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 392 and 449, n. 400.

to become the primary subject of history.²⁸ Indeed, this concept allows the narrative of history to comply with some rules. The first of them all is the chronology or 'order of time'.²⁹ Secondly, history must also be coupled with a geographical description, which he qualifies as the 'natural eye and real light of history'.³⁰ This double articulation of historical narrative on the temporal and spatial axis, so clearly applicable to the narrative of discoveries made by his contemporaries, would be developed in his theoretical book *l'Histoire des Histoires*. 'Because after the truth, nothing is as particular to history as knowledge and the order of times and places where each thing happened'.³¹ In short, the notion of discovery can and must become the subject of the narrative of history, of any historic narrative.

This historiographic model established by La Popelinière was to be applied not only to the present but to all former times as well. What else then than a rereading of the classical history *par excellence* – the history of Ancient Greece, with this new concept of discovery in mind? After reviewing all the travels and other achievements of the Greeks regarding discoveries, classical Greece comes off the pedestal where the Renaissance had put it. All the discoveries it passed on to posterity were in fact borrowings from foreign nations. As a consequence of this provocative review of ancient history, Greece becomes 'the worst lying nation in the world'.³² Its writings had led one to believe that the origin of science came from Greece whereas it really originated in

²⁸ Ibid., 147: 'On this occasion, I just wanted to show the different opinions of men of that time on the discoveries of such strange lands'.

²⁹ Ibid., 152: 'I shall study [these discoveries] from their very beginning and will continue with them up to now, with such an ordering of years that the text will be clearer and easier, using only the very narrative of those who have traveled, or who at least have written truly'.

³⁰ Ibid., 148: 'I think it is urgent to give you a large and specific description of these three parts before mentioning our discoveries. Because as Geography is the natural eye and the real light of history : any narrative will always be obscure and one would not understand any writing, as true as it may be, if one does not know the place, the people's mood, and the quality of the country one hears about'.

³¹ La Popelinière, *L'Histoire des Histoires* 1, 49.

³² La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 127: 'They so clearly expressed what they came to look for between the rest of the Egyptians, Assyrians and others touching on the knowledge of divine, human and natural things: that they managed with time to achieve a big honor. Seeing such a credit amongst their fellow men, that none of

its neighbouring countries. Furthermore, Greece, the ancient nation, becomes, for La Popelinière, a nation of a 'new people'.³³ When drawing a conclusion to this idea which was going against the most largely accepted opinion, he insisted.

As for the youth of this nation (not for our eyes, but for those of their time), I will only mention the opinion of those who want to discourse only for pleasure, and follow no other author's line (...) since the memory of anything ancient [in Greece] seems to be contrary to all that follows.³⁴

Such a comment demonstrates how La Popelinière really plunges into a new historicity by mobilizing this concept of discovery, 'in which the youth or oldness of a country and nation can much better be noticed than in other things'.³⁵ Faithful to chronology, paying attention to geography and other sciences in general, history as the narrative of discoveries is also a reordering of time. As a first consequence of this upheaval, the aim is not only to reproduce ancient people's great achievements but to overtake them.

The time that has passed since [ancient people] till now, must make us superior in everything. For what it taught us through their writings, everything they knew and from which they could find some pride. But time gives us moreover the knowledge of so many rare and excellent things, that the elders did not know about and that Nature has since then revealed.³⁶

The discoveries of his century are the proof of the superiority of the Moderns, who 'slice through all the seas', over the Ancients, 'so fearful to get lost in the Ocean, not daring to go too far away from its

them (the worst lying nation in the world) dared to credit the origin of sciences to their neighboring predecessors, who have always been called new people, young nation and who had no knowledge of old things by their neighbors'.

³³ Ibid., 128–129: 'One must therefore not expect from the Greeks, for their youth and short time, such great things as one would from the oldest and greatest monarchies'.

³⁴ Ibid., 129.

³⁵ Ibid., 134.

³⁶ La Popelinière, *L'Histoire des Histoires* 2, 13: 'Le temps qui s'est écoulé depuis [les Anciens] jusqu'icy, nous doit rendre superieurs en toutes choses. Pour ce qu'il nous a fait cognoistre en leurs escrits, tout ce qu'ils ont sceu & dont ils se sont peu prevaloir. Puis nous donne de surcroist, la cognoissance de tant de choses rares et excellentes, que les premiers ont ignoré & que la Nature a produit depuis eux'.

shores'.³⁷ Refuting one last time authors who think 'ignorance even more increased between human beings as we moved away from this [Greek] origin, to approach the natural and general corruption of our century',³⁸ he assures his reader that the things of knowledge are therefore not to be found in the reproduction of the past but on the contrary to be discovered ahead of us. The historicity established by the narrative of discoveries proposed by la Popelinière reverses the relations between the past, the present and the future. Only the latter should be the promise of a major achievement.³⁹

Just as [Nature] reserved things for us that it hid from [Ancient people], it also hides things from us, which it will reveal to our survivors, who for the same reasons, should prevail upon us and our Ancestors.⁴⁰

As for the present, it is only a relative state of ignorance included between an even more ignorant one – the past – and a future which will be a little less so. The role of history consists in precisely locating our present on this time line which strives towards infinity, for more knowledge. History becomes the temporary.

A time will come which by a long diligence will shed light on what is most hidden from us. A century is not enough to look for so many things.⁴¹

To those believing that 'we must not [...] be so ambitious and greedy that we want human nature to make us discover everything on the earth as well as in the sky, in the elements, in sciences, in men's intentions and actions',⁴² he replies that 'there will still be enough unknown things left to give sense to posterity'.⁴³ He then begs his contemporaries

³⁷ La Popelinière, *Les Trois mondes* 13–14. For the cultural dimension of discoveries in France, see Atkinson G., *Les nouveaux horizons de la Renaissance française* (Paris: 1935).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, 7.

³⁹ For a definition of a « régime d'historicité » as a peculiar articulation between past, present and future, see Hartog F., *Régimes d'historicité* (Paris: 2003).

⁴⁰ La Popelinière, *L'Histoire des Histoires* 2, 13.

⁴¹ La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 128.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 414. To a similar argument Spinoza replied: 'Stop, once again, calling mysteries some awful mistakes; do not shamefully confuse what we still do not know or what we have not discovered yet with what is established as absurd, like these terrible secrets from the Church which you believe transcend even more the understanding than they contradict the right reason'. *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: 1992) 1146.

⁴³ La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 414.

not to limit themselves to what they have discovered: in the second half of the sixteenth century, the 'New World' is already old.⁴⁴

As he was busy reconstructing the Greeks' travels and discoveries, La Popelinière came to wonder how a nation, so wise and exemplary in many respects, could have ignored what the Moderns had just discovered: the existence of a continent West of Europe.

The dispute is old and not solved, that is to know if the countries discovered by those of our time were unknown to our first fathers, and to all of their descendants.⁴⁵

Contrary to what one might think, La Popelinière, who did not find it difficult to acknowledge the superiority of the Moderns over the Ancients, refrains from settling this question and provides quite an original explanation to his reader. According to him, if the Greeks were ignorant of discoveries, the blame should perhaps not be laid on the sailors but on the historians.

Undoubtedly their historiographers did not perform their duty, not telling us what was the most remarkable in their centuries.⁴⁶

Curiously enough, he allows his reader to believe that the Greeks had perhaps 'made long travels which may be equal or superior to those of our Portuguese, Italians or Spaniards'⁴⁷ and that ancient historians were more interested in fiction than in discoveries and had therefore not reported on them. 'The authors' omission to describe those journeys was immense'.⁴⁸ The lesson is clear: undertaking perilous travels

⁴⁴ For example, he explains how we are calling 'Terres Neuves' a land 'even if they may be older'. *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁵ La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 140. 'From where may come this vulgaire opinion, so old in our people's and our ancestors' brains, that the ancients did not travel as far as we did?' *Ibid.*, 127. Several authors had already pondered on this question of justifying the ignorance of such a cultured people: the large majority justifying the ancients' ignorance by pointing out, like La Popelinière, 'the situation of the country which is in enclosed lands and very far away from the ocean' (*Ibid.*, 133) while others sing the moderns' unequalled merits. On these matters, see Hartog F. *Anciens, Modernes, Sauvages* (Paris: 2005).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁴⁸ The Greeks are not the only ones; it is also the Persians and Romans who are failing. They 'hardly travelled or their historiographers are much to be blamed for having kept quiet on their exploits'. *Ibid.*, 144.

is not enough to make discoveries. Being able to describe them is also necessary. Anxious to set up a new writing of history, La Popelinière also rethought the respective roles that travels on the one hand and historiography on the other are made to play. If the *bien faire* (doing well) is already established, what is now this *bien fait* (benefit) suggested by La Popelinière for the writing of history?

While discussing the discoveries made by his contemporaries, La Popelinière voiced criticism of the Treaty of Tordesillas, the 'demarcation of the world' that was signed between the Spaniards and the Portuguese in 1494. It is not surprising that the promoter of French and Dutch colonial enterprises opposed the Papal donation of all the new land discovered, past and future, to the Iberians.⁴⁹ In the 'answer from the French and other nations to the Spaniards and Portuguese's claims on the sovereignty of the eastern and western islands',⁵⁰ La Popelinière states the main arguments undermining the validity of the Iberian monopoly of discovery matters. Firstly, the Pope, not owning these 'newly discovered'⁵¹ lands, should not have given them out 'since it is an injustice to give what is not his'. Secondly, the Spaniards, with their 'tyranny' and 'cruelties', did not respect the treaty which aimed at achieving the evangelization of these newly conquered lands. Finally, the right of the strongest ('the oldest law of them all')⁵² is not the strength of the right. However, there is an argument used by the Spaniards which appeals to La Popelinière: 'Their main right is to be the first in having made the discovery of those countries'.⁵³ He therefore acknowledges them the right to own these lands. According to the law of *res nullius*, 'what has no master belong to the first one who takes it'.⁵⁴ Acknowledging such a right of priority was not innocent. If

⁴⁹ La Popelinière copies a section of the Bull of Pope Alexander VI on 'all the islands and lands found and to be found, discovered and to be discovered.' Ibid., 233.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 279.

⁵¹ Ibid., 123.

⁵² Ibid., 279.

⁵³ Ibid., 280.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 281. On the right of the first, see Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World* (London: 1995) 76–82.

this 'right of the first' was the only one to legitimize the Spanish and the Portuguese ownership of the New World, it would leave the door open to other European nations to come and claim territories beyond the seas. Italy, as his first example, could also claim some rights in the New World since,

Were not the Italians the first to discover the Indies? If someone asks [the Spaniards] in their conscience who it was, they would not dare to deny that the Genoese Christopher Columbus was the first who decided to go and look for the islands and a major part of the western coast. Then a Florentine, Amerigo Vespucci, etc.⁵⁵

Making full use of this argument, he ends up analyzing the French involvement in the enterprise of his century. 'The French however, especially Normans and Bretons, claim to have first discovered those lands and to have traded since long with the savages from Brazil'. In this regard, 'because we were the first to discover and occupy them', such lands should by right belong to the French Crown. 'But like in other things, the French were poorly advised on the matter and did not have the common sense nor the discretion to leave any public writing to guarantee their achievements, as noble and brave as those of others'.⁵⁶ La Popelinière thus takes up the argument he had already used to justify the Greeks' ignorance of the New World and applies it to his contemporaries: history writing does not only describe a discovery, but also justifies and guarantees the ownership of the newly discovered territories. If France did not manage to get a foothold in the New World, the blame should not be put on French sailors who were as able as the Spaniards or the Portuguese, but on the French historiographers who 'by lack of understanding leave no memories of their beautiful enterprises'.⁵⁷ Anxious to put this right, La Popelinière therefore proposes to 'shed a light on the first spotting of Florida and the nation that discovered it, so that no more mistakes are made'. The function of such a narrative is, from then on, no longer to achieve a

⁵⁵ Ibid., 280.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 380. It is interesting to note how influential this argument was to be. Charles de la Roncière does not say anything different when he states: 'But the difficulty for our sailors to register on a map the result of their navigations, although they perfectly know how to find their way in open sea, will obviously make them inferior to the Spanish and Portuguese navigators and will prevent them from claiming more than one discovery'. *Un inventaire de bord en 1294 et les origines de la navigation hauturière, extrait de La bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartres* 58 (Paris: 1897).

⁵⁷ La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 380.

humanist ideal but to perform a practical task: 'to know for good, the right that one and others have in claiming Florida'.⁵⁸ Once the implicit rule of priority is established, the stakes of history writing becomes obvious: claiming sovereignty over one land or another in the name of the anteriority of the discovery. In the emerging competition of European nations overseas at the turn of the seventeenth century, this is the very practical role that history should play, its 'main fruit' to quote La Popelinière.

Not all history can sanction discoveries and ownership. Spanish historians surely acted as a model in the historiography of discoveries, since, without them, 'the enterprises of Columbus and others who discovered the New World would have already been buried into perpetual oblivion'.⁵⁹ Yet La Popelinière also notices that they have sometimes been overzealous by 'filling their histories with made-up stories'⁶⁰ in order to claim lands on which they had no right. By enforcing the right of the first as a tacit rule, the importance given to chronology in history writing becomes meaningful. The date which had become the demarcation line between the known and the unknown will also be a guarantor in this sharing of the world.⁶¹ It represents a state of knowledge as well as a state of the distribution of possessions overseas.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid., 270–271.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 76. Tributes paid to the Iberians are as numerous as ambivalent: 'Although tainted with a vile desire to practice something else than virtue, the Portuguese and Spaniards, by a highly commendable curiosity, wanted to retrace, or as they claim, go further than all the ancients in the discovery of new worlds. That's why I would like to honor them more than any other nation'. Ibid., 124. This admiration for Spanish chroniclers is also found in Jan Huygen van Linschoten, who translated José de Acosta's work on the New World and praised him highly. See G. van Dillen (ed.), *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van het bedrijfsleven en het gildenwezen van Amsterdam* (The Hague: 1929) 680.

⁶⁰ La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 280.

⁶¹ 'That's the main fruit of history: the continuation of which will make you see the attempts and discoveries that our Frenchmen made on the new lands included under the name of West Indies'. La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 254.

⁶² It reminds us also that the titles of many travel accounts state that the discoveries in question are valid until their date of publication. To quote just one example, the French translation of van Linschoten's work is: *Histoire de la navigation de Jan Huygen van Linschoten [...] contenant diverses descriptions de Pays, Costes, Havres, Rivières, Caps, & autres lieux jusques à présent decouvverts par les Portugais* (Amsterdam, T. Pierre: 1610).

Using this concept of discovery to put time in order is also a way to put the world in order.

That from now on European expansion happens by and through history does not mean, in the second half of the sixteenth century, that it is a past history. On the contrary, the implication is not so much in the discoveries already made, but rather in those that remain to be made. From his office in Poitou where he read and wrote about the discoveries of his century,⁶³ La Popelinière was convinced that 'there are as many or more lands to discover as there have been discovered already'. This vision of a world where everything remains to be discovered runs through his whole book, like an echo to the endless accumulation of knowledge he suggested. 'How strangely big is the world', he delightedly wrote in his introduction. 'Here is a world which can only be filled with goods and excellent things. One just has to discover it'.⁶⁴ To this world already split in two, after the discovery on a New one, he tried to introduce a 'third world', which would give its meaning to the title of the book. 'I will just divide what men consider habitable into an old world, a new one and an unknown one'.⁶⁵ About this third 'unknown' world, which differs from the 'old' and from the 'new', nothing can be said. Not having been discovered yet, it cannot be the subject of any claim and still has to be represented by historical discourse to be acknowledged. 'This leaves us with the representation of the third world, of which the only knowledge you have is that you know nothing'.⁶⁶ Such a definition is not insignificant, because by giving some room to the unknown, it departs from the then accepted model of human knowledge. But this sacrifice made on the altar of a knowledge that is paradoxically led by ignorance, is not futile. La Popelinière's 'world to be discovered' was also the promise of a possible involvement on the other continents of non-Iberian nations. The right *to* the unknown meant the right *over* the unknown.

⁶³ On La Popelinière's sources, see Beaulieu, *Les Trois Mondes* 33–41.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 77 and 417. The argument about the size of the world is a key element of Northern European countries in their claim for access to the Indies. Hugo Grotius justified in his *Memorandum*, which he wrote on the eve of the peace negotiations with Spain in 1608, the right of the VOC to trade with the East Indies where, he argued, 'most countries did not know the King of Spain and Portugal'. See Ittersum M.J. van, *Profit and Principle. Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies* (Leiden: 2006) 255.

⁶⁵ La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 147.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 412.

In 1600, Richard Hakluyt wrote a report for Queen Elizabeth entitled 'Certayne reason why the English Merchants may trade into the East Indies, especially to such rich kingdoms and dominions that are not subject to the kinge of Spayne & Portugal: together with the true limits of the Portugals' conquest & Jurisdiction in those oriental parts.'⁶⁷ Based on published histories, the report aimed at separating the territories owned by the Iberian monarch from the 'unknown' which belonged to no one. It is in this latter space that European nations keen to trade with other continents could now enter. 'There is enough for the one and the others',⁶⁸ La Popelinière would say. Richard Hakluyt, the great instigator of the English drive for Eastern and Western trade, was familiar with the work of La Popelinière⁶⁹ and, convinced that a right to the unknown merged with a right over the unknown, he undertook to compile a list with all the navigations carried out by his countrymen from the most remote times. Explicitly encouraging the launching of an English colonial empire, the publication of such a life time's work answered the demand that one should be able to produce written evidence in order to claim one's rights on a land overseas. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, this type of travel collection was not new. Ramusio had started the trend half a century earlier with his *Navigazioni*, which would become the main source of knowledge about America, Africa and Asia in Europe.⁷⁰ However, from the seventeenth century onwards, the fact that these collections were no longer indifferent to the travellers' nationalities and were printed according to this criterion tends to make us think that they began to have a political significance that they had not had in the sixteenth century. This change was not minor, simply because this genre of travel

⁶⁷ Hakluyt R., *The Original Writings of the two Richard Hakluyts*, ed. E.M. Germaine Taylor (London: 1935) 2, 465.

⁶⁸ La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 167.

⁶⁹ Hakluyt was an attentive reader of La Popelinière, whom he quoted several times as an authority in his own writings. According to E.G.R. Taylor, he may even have considered translating *Les Trois Mondes* into English. A privilege to do so was granted on May 9th, 1583. See Hakluyt, *Original Writings* 241, 295 and 398. In *L'Amiral de France* (n.p.), La Popelinière also mentions a translation of the 'Project of Les Trois Mondes, [which] has been so well received, that foreigners should read it in their own language'.

⁷⁰ Ramusio G.B., *Delle Navigazioni e Viaggi* (Venice, Giunti: 1550).

collections would largely dominate the publication of books on the non-European world from the seventeenth century onwards – either based on individual travels, official diaries or collections of journeys. To name just the most notable ones, let us mention Purchas⁷¹ who continued Hakluyt's work on English travels, Lescarbot⁷² and Bergeron⁷³ as their French counterparts and Commelin⁷⁴ who preceded Valentyn⁷⁵ as their Dutch ones. Earlier on, the publication, in several languages, of the first Dutch journeys into the East and the West Indies most probably answered these requirements too.⁷⁶ Not only content to make European readers aware of the reality of other continents, these books also had a claiming agenda that is largely forgotten today.⁷⁷

If such a practice for claiming land through writing presided over the printing and publication of works on European overseas territories, it may also throw light on the handwritten representation of these spaces. Even better, it certainly took part in the systematization of writing practices during journeys to distant places. Again, it is not in France that the implementation of this writing/claiming logic could be found. The intuition of La Popelinière who, at the end of his life,

⁷¹ Purchas S., *Purchas his pilgrimage, or, Relations of the world and the religions observed in all ages and places discovered* [...] (London, William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone: 1626).

⁷² Lescarbot M., *Histoire de la Nouvelle France, contenant les navigations, découvertes, et habitations faites par les Français es Indes Occidentales et Nouvelle-France souz l'aveu et autorité de nos Roys Tres-Chrétiens* (Paris, J. Milliot: 1609).

⁷³ Bergeron P., *Traicté de la navigation* (Paris, Jean de Heuqueville: 1629).

⁷⁴ Commelin I., *Begin ende voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Amsterdam, Jan Jansz.: 1645).

⁷⁵ Valentyn F., *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën, vervattende een naaukeurige en uitvoerige verhandeling van Nederlands mogentheid* (Amsterdam, J. van Braam: 1724–1726).

⁷⁶ As for the East Indies, see Lodewijcksz. W., *D'eerste boek. Historie van Indien waer inne verhaelt is de avontueren die de Hollantsche schepen bejagent zijn* [...] (Amsterdam, Michiel Colijn: 1598) and Neck J.C. van, *Het tweede boek, journal oft dagh-register, inhoudende een warachtich verhael ende historische vertellinghe vande reyse* [...] (Amsterdam, Cronelis Claeszoon: 1601). In the foreword to his *Nieuwe Wereldt ofte beschijvinghe van West-Indiën* (Leiden, Elzeviers: 1630), Johan de Laet, another reader of La Popelinière, takes up ones of his arguments: 'There had been, for several years, a controversy between Spain and the other Europeans Princes, regarding the sovereignty and ownership of these lands: the Spaniards claiming all of America, as a result of the gift made to them by the Pope in Rome, the others, on the other hand, claiming and occupying this part or that one. However, we did not make it our duty to act as an arbiter between the parties involved but only to report simply and precisely what has been done by each nation in each area. [...] We always believed that the gift of something belonging to someone else is void by right and this fictitious ownership must not prevent other princes from trading and establishing colonies in the areas where the Spaniards do not live'.

⁷⁷ Unless the tradition of writing national history is its direct heir, as for instance the Hakluyt's Society in England or the Linschoten Vereniging in The Netherlands.

turned to The Netherlands and tried to board a ship of the VOC, was undoubtedly right. Who, apart from the Honorable Company, could boast of such a degree of systematization in the written representation of travels? Instructions in this matter, constantly updated, refined and distilled by the directors throughout the existence of the Company, made this system of writing one of the most accomplished attempts to achieve the most precise and accurate representation of visited spaces.⁷⁸

Of course, one should not forget that writing was made to play many other roles. The need for a technical knowledge of places, simply to be able to reach them, came first. Next came the commercial interest which presided over the numerous reports about the benefits that a foreign territory could bring. Finally, the company's administration had to make full use of the circulation of information for governing possessions on four different continents.⁷⁹ But to all these roles, one must now add that of claiming sovereignty in the context of European competition. In the seventeenth century, representation meant possession. It is for this very reason that in 1651, on the eve of his voyage to the southern tip of the African continent where he was instructed to create a refreshment station for ships, Van Riebeeck got these instructions from the directors.

For which end you will, upon your arrival, immediately make inspection of the fields and arable ground most suitable and serviceable to the Company, and will there erect marks of occupation – making also a map of the same, as a proof that you took possession of such arable ground and fields in behalf of the Company.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ For example, the instructions to discover the Terra Australis issued to Abel Tasman in Castel Batavia on August 13, 1642, referred to the Journal he was to write: 'To all the open land and island you will discover, you shall take possession in the name of the States Generals, Sovereign of the United Provinces. In uninhabited countries, or countries that have no governments, you shall erect marks of occupation or plant the flag of our prince, because such countries belong to the discoverer [...]. Of all you discover you shall take accurate notes in your Journal, with the names of the persons who are present, for the benefit of our Republic'. Roeper V.D. – Wildeman G.J.D. (eds.), *Het Journaal van Abel Tasman* (The Hague: 2006) 46. On instructions, see especially Zandvliet, *Mapping for Money*.

⁷⁹ On the administrative function of writing, see Delmas A., "The Role of Writing in the first steps of the Colony: the *Journal* of van Riebeeck, 1652–1662" in Worden N. (ed.), *Contingent Live: Social Identity and Material Culture in the VOC World* (Cape Town: 2007) 500–511.

⁸⁰ Moodie D., *The Record* (Cape Town: 1959) 9.

What now remains to be found are cases where sovereignty over remote places was achieved not by the noise of the cannon but by the rustle of a paper which was, in Europe, its ultimate guarantee. *Uti posseditis*: what apart from writing, and especially history, could establish a fact and, according to the rule of anteriority, make it a right? In October 1611, several London merchants trading in the East Indies drew up a petition to the Dutch Ambassador in order to find a diplomatic solution to the recent conflicts in the distant seas between the two friendly European nations. They complained 'that the Hollanders having gotten into their possession, dyvers of the chief places of traffique in those parts, and forciblye appropriating some, which do of right belong unto the English, to trade there before any other Nation whatsoever'.⁸¹ During the conferences that took place, following the petition, in London in 1613 and in The Hague in 1615, English delegates made full use of published histories to prove the anteriority of an English presence in the Moluccas.

We can for the same reason insist on the deal made by the knight Drake with the King of Ternata in 1580, but since you took very little account of it during our last conference, we will now call on the Spaniards who do not like either of us. Bertolome Leonardo in his third book on the conquest of Maluku describes the knight Drake in these words: y saliendo diversas vezes a visitar el Rey concerto que fuesse amigo y confederado de la Reyna y naciones de Inglaterra y desde luego se assentassen fatorias y levando entre otres dones un Anillo precioso que el ternate le dio para la Reyna se partia a su terra con gran cantidad de clavo etc. If your contract is valid, this one is even better as it precedes yours by many years.⁸²

Once we are able to collect many such examples, then we too will be able to laugh at the papers in which European nations had placed their claims of owning the entire Earth, just like La Popelinière was making fun of the paper wasted by the Spaniards and Portuguese to settle their differences on the Treaty of Tordesillas.

They wasted time and much paper after such protests⁸³ [making] the rest of the world laugh at these two kings who acted without the opinion of others, not even of the ones whose goods they take without listening to them.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Clark G.N. – van Eysinga W.J.M., *The Colonial Conferences between England and the Netherlands in 1613 and 1615* (Leiden: 1940) 41.

⁸² Ibid., 186. The book quoted by the English delegate is Bartolome Leornado de Argensola's *Conquista de las Islas Malucas* (Madrid, Alonso Martin: 1609) 107.

⁸³ La Popelinière, *Les Trois Mondes* 410.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 358.

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THE MODEL OF THE VOC IN EARLY
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE
(HUGO GROTIUS AND PIERRE BERGERON)

Grégoire Holtz

Pro-colonial discourse has evolved radically in modern times, transitioning from the early stages of the papal donations (symbolized by, amongst other things, the famous ‘Inter Caetera’ bull of 1494, in which Pope Alexander VI divided newly-discovered territories between Portugal and Spain) to a new mercantilist conception founded on commercial competition between the European powers.¹ Among the milestones that illustrate this paradigm shift, Grotius’s argument for freedom of the seas was decisive in the sense that it legitimized the activities of the VOC (including acts of piracy) by sanctioning a transfer of authority from the pope to the public Dutch company, widely recognized for its pre-capitalist character.

The aim of this paper is not to examine the religious framework that, shortly after the Reformation, set different justifications of colonialism in opposition, but to reflect on the means of transmission of the colonial rationale from one state to another. Specifically, we will examine the means by which Grotius’s legal justification of the VOC was imported to France in the early seventeenth century. The role of intermediaries, such as the prolific writer Pierre Bergeron, as well as the connections between commercial law and colonialism, are thus at the heart of this study.

A basic methodological question must be addressed: should a distinction be made between commercial and colonial rationale? If the two concepts are distinct in the mind of the twenty first century reader, it is nonetheless apparent that there is a certain connection between

¹ See the works of Ferro M., *Histoire des colonisations. Des conquêtes aux indépendances, XIII^e–XX^e siècle* (Paris: 1994); Meyer J. – Tarrade J. – Rey-Goldzeiguer A., *Histoire de la France coloniale* 1. *‘La conquête. Des origines à 1870’, first edition 1991* (Paris: 1996); Braudel F., *Civilisation matérielle et capitalisme* 2. *Les jeux de l’échange, XV^e–XVII^e siècles* (Paris: 1967); Pagden A., *Lords of All the World. Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500–c. 1800* (New Haven: 1995).

these two programs of conquest and the early modern period. For both Bergeron and Grotius, there was no real difference between the commercial and the colonial paradigm, though the latter admittedly implies settlement, according to the definition of the Latin *colonia*. That these two expansionist objectives differ only in degree is demonstrated by the choices of the Batavian directors of the VOC, who both conquered territories that they then colonized (Batavia, for example, founded in 1619), while at the same time they established commercial ties with local potentates like the sultanate of Aceh. It was first and foremost a pragmatic view of expansionism that brought the VOC closer to its European imitators.

Pierre Bergeron and the Interest in Colonial Renewal in France

To accurately assess the dissemination and reception of the VOC in France we must introduce the obscure figure of Pierre Bergeron (c.1580–c.1637), who was its greatest apologist in France during the reign of Henry IV and Louis XIII. Pierre Bergeron's interest in the VOC is directly connected to his position as a tireless propagandist for French colonialism. In fact, Bergeron applied his training as a lawyer to the colonial cause, of which he became the historian through his *Traité des Tartares* (1634) and his *Traité de la Navigation* (1629), the latter of which presents an inventory of all voyages of discovery and European conquest. This work fulfils a primarily nationalist objective by promoting past expeditions of the French navy (including the partial conquest of the Canary Islands by Jean de Béthencourt in 1402)² in order to better promote the idea of new colonial conquests. For Bergeron, the writing of colonial history is of a prospective nature: his monographs are inscribed within a militant context that sought to shape the aspirations of his contemporaries.

Bergeron's writing career was greatly facilitated by his position as public auditor (*conseiller référendaire*) at the chancellery of the Parliament of Paris, which put him in direct contact with the literati and above all, the printers and booksellers of the capital. The position required him

² In fact, Pierre Bergeron published a complement to his *Traité de la Navigation* called *Histoire de la première découverte et conquête des Canaries [...] par Jean de Bethencourt* and based on a manuscript entrusted to him by Galien de Béthencourt, the heir to the Norman explorer.

to write summaries of any work necessitating a royal letter of privilege, which consequently allowed him to play the role of indirect censor in the Republic of Letters. Bergeron also capitalized on his role as intermediary between printers, authors, royal authorities and explorers, by becoming a ghost writer of several accounts of travels to the East Indies. He was able to ensure the publication of numerous works, and was involved at both ends of the editorial process for the travel accounts of François Pyrard de Laval (1615 and 1619), Jean Mocquet (1617) and Vincent Le Blanc (1648, posthumously). Basing himself on explorers' manuscripts or direct dictation, Bergeron rewrote the accounts with an emphasis on monitoring their scientific content and, most importantly, reformulating the material in a manner that would appeal to the literate classes.³

This discreet but important role in the process of authorizing and circulating monographs is connected to a desire to promote a new colonial policy in France. This is demonstrated by Pyrard de Laval's account, which retraces the unfortunate fate of the first East Indies trade companies which, in the wake of the East India Company and the VOC, attempted to break the Portuguese monopoly of the spice trade in 1601. The result was total failure: the first ship ran aground in the Maldives, where almost the complete crew perished with the exception of Pyrard, who was a prisoner for five years in the archipelago; the second ship succeeded in buying pepper and spices in Sumatra but was looted during the return trip.⁴ The publication of Pyrard's account was specifically intended to play down such difficulties; Bergeron has his explorer expressing his wish 'That this account might serve to give advice and instruction to those who wish to undertake this voyage, to avoid the mishaps which befell me, and those that I saw befall others'.⁵

³ For more on Pierre Bergeron, see my dissertation *Pierre Bergeron et l'écriture du voyage à la fin de la Renaissance (les voyages de Jean Mocquet, François Pyrard de Laval et Vincent Leblanc)*, Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne (2006), forthcoming.

⁴ This is demonstrated by Vitré's *Description du premier voyage fait à Sumatra par les Français en l'an 1603*, re-edited in Pyrard de Laval F., *Voyage de Pyrard de Laval (1601-1611)*, ed. X. de Castro (Paris: 1998), vol. II, 905-932. Vitré's ship was looted by ... Dutch sailors of the VOC.

⁵ 'Aussi que ce récit pourra d'aventure servir pour donner avis et instruction à ceux qui voudraient faire ce voyage, d'éviter les inconvénients où je suis tombé, ou bien que j'ai vu advenir à d'autres'. Pyrard de Laval, *Voyage de Pyrard de Laval*, 33.

The move toward a new colonial future was thus popular in early seventeenth century France. In fact, after 50 years of civil wars and a series of failures in North America⁶ the French began to consider voyages of conquest, though with some timidity. This new attitude was apparent in Champlain and Lescarbot's Canadian explorations, in the opening of the West Indies, as well as in the attempts to find the Northwest passage, where contacts with the United Provinces have been proven.⁷ Two years after the anti-Spanish Treaty of Compiègne of 1624 between France and the United Provinces, the Assembly of Notables of 1626 approved the unification of the French navy, the formation of new trade companies and the concentration of political power in the hands of Cardinal Richelieu. The *Traité de la Navigation*, published in 1629 (the year of the Michau code, which specifies the legal context for trade companies), is inscribed within this new perspective in its celebration of Richelieu's *coup de force*: for Bergeron, the renewed control over the French navy had to be accompanied by a publication celebrating the hope for colonial investment. This led Bergeron, a Protestant who converted to state Catholicism, to turn to the VOC, which at the time enjoyed significant prestige due to its successes in the East Indies. The connection between Bergeron and the VOC was established through his relationship with a man who, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, became the most famous defender of the VOC against the claims of the Spanish 'universal monarchy': Hugo Grotius.

Bergeron and Grotius: The Meeting of Two Propagandists

The paths of the two propagandists were bound to cross: not only did they share the same visceral anti-Iberian sentiment,⁸ but they

⁶ On this point, see Lestringant F., *Le Huguenot et le sauvage. L'Amérique et la controverse coloniale en France au temps des Guerres de Religion (1555–1589)* (Paris: 1990; re-ed. Geneva: 2004).

⁷ On these links, and more generally on the first trade companies, see the works of Roncière Ch. de la: "Le Passage du Nord-Est et la Compagnie française du pôle arctique au temps de Henry IV", *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes* (Paris: 1918) 154–178; *Les Précurseurs de la Compagnie des Indes orientales, la politique coloniale des Malouins* (Paris: 1913).

⁸ On the complexity of contemporary geopolitical relations between France and the United Provinces, see Slot B.J. (ed.), *Amitié et Soupçons. Deux siècles de relations diplomatiques*

were also part of the same network of erudite humanists who, in the Republic of Letters of the early modern era, maintained communication through correspondence and the exchange of books and ideas.⁹ Several letters from Grotius to Guillaume Lusson,¹⁰ president of the *Cour des Monnaies*, and to Jean de Cordes¹¹ attest to the relationship between the two men. Grotius likely met Bergeron, not during his first trip to France, but rather during the second trip (or escape) following the fall of the Grand Pensionary Van Oldenbarnevelt. In March 1621, Grotius found refuge in France through a humanist circle that Bergeron was particularly close to. Whether it be Peiresc,¹² the Dupuy brothers or Jérôme Bignon, the future director of the King's library to whom Grotius dedicated his treatise *De veritate religionis christiane* in 1627 (and who commissioned Pyrard's travel account from Bergeron),

franco-néerlandaises 1588–1795 (exh. cat. Institut Français – Rijksmuseum Meermanno-Westreenianum: 1988).

⁹ On this topic, see Bots H. – Waquet F., *La République des Lettres* (Paris: 1997).

¹⁰ See his re-edited correspondence: Molhuysen P.C. – Meulenbroek B.L. (eds.), *Briefwisseling van Hugo Grotius*, vol. V (Leiden: 1966), 27 (23 February 1632), 61 (27 August 1632), 85 (22 December 1632), 95 (9 February 1633). References to Bergeron in this correspondence consist for the most part of good wishes that the philosopher transmitted to Bergeron and the brothers Sainte-Marthe via Lusson. All of these references to Bergeron date from after the 1629 *Traité de la Navigation*, and were perhaps prompted by Grotius's desire to thank the ghost-writer who had defended him (see below). In a declaration dated 23 February 1632, Grotius wrote: 'I assure you that among the pleasures of France, I held none in higher regard than your lecture. It reminds me of your pretty lanes, your grave comments and of Messrs Sainte Marthe and Bergeron, and all sorrow passes'. ('Je vous assure que parmy les douceurs de la France, il ni en a aucune que j'aye estimé plus que celle de vostre conférence. Quand il me souvient de vos belles allées, de vos propos graves et de messieurs de Sainte Marthe et Bergeron, tout le chagrin se passe'). Thanks to Bergeron, the *Traité & description des animaux, arbres & fruits des Indes Orientales* was published, as a supplement to the account of Pyrard de Laval's voyage in 1615 and was to be dedicated to Lusson.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 280 (19 September 1634), 287 (11 October 1634), 288 (30 October 1634). These letters demonstrate that Grotius personally received and read Bergeron's works, such as his *Traité des Tartares*, which had just been published. Grotius wrote to Jean de Cordes on 19 September 1634 that 'I read Bergeron's book on the Tartars very carefully, you can discern quite well the features that are merely those of an elegant style, no matter how great my esteem and affection for him may be' ('Librum de Scythia Bergeronis quanto cum studio lecturus sim, satis intelligis, qui noris, quanti ego illius viri et diligentiam et judicium faciam'). Above all, it seems that Grotius corresponded directly with Bergeron; Jean de Cordes wrote on 11 October 1634: 'I will pass your letter along to Mr. Bergeron, who is vacationing in Blerencourt'. Jean de Cordes was, notably, the translator of two authors known for their unruliness with respect to the Papacy: the Venetian Paolo Sarpi and the Jesuit Mariana.

¹² See Grotius H., *Epistolae quotquot reperiri potuerunt* (Amsterdam, P. et I. Blaeu: 1687) 796.

Bergeron moved in the same scholarly circle as Grotius.¹³ The two were to meet in the Valois, Bergeron's native region and the site of the president of Mesmes' château of Balagny,¹⁴ where Grotius resided and wrote his treatise *De jure belli ac pacis*. The two men did not, however, enjoy the same intellectual prestige. While Grotius's reputation was rapidly established at an international level, Bergeron remained much less known. Yet it was precisely Bergeron's mercenary pen that was useful to the Dutch thinker for his defence of the VOC. To better understand the relationship between the two men, an examination of the fate of Grotius's *Mare Liberum* is necessary.¹⁵

We know that Grotius's work was originally commissioned by the directors of the VOC, who may well have felt the need for a document supporting their effort to justify the seizure of a Portuguese ship by the Dutch admiral Van Heemskerck on 25 June 1603, which was carrying a valuable shipment of Chinese porcelain and silk.¹⁶ This event prompted several trials within the VOC, but more importantly was confronted with threats from the Spanish crown, to which Walerande's Dutch pamphlet *Le Plaidoyer de l'Indien hollandois contre le prétendu pacifi-*

¹³ On this point, see Zuber R., "La triple jeunesse de Hugo Grotius," *XVII^e siècle* 35, 4 (1983) 437–450. Zuber points to the fact that Jérôme Bignon describes Grotius as the Aristotle of his time in his speech "Sur la parole". On the French reception of Grotius, see also Thomann M., "Les traductions françaises de Grotius", *XVII^e siècle* 35, 4 (1983) 471–485.

¹⁴ On this point, see Macon G., "Grotius in the Senlis region in 1623", *Mémoires du Comité archéologique de Senlis* (Senlis: 1917). The president of Mesmes agreed to receive Grotius at Balagny, but the latter was not permitted to receive any Dutch Reformed ministers or practice a religion other than that of his host. Saumaise and Rigaut visited the philosopher, who was then writing his treatise *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* with access to the extensive library of François de Thou, bequeathed to him by his father Jacques-Auguste.

¹⁵ The bibliography on the subject of Grotius is extensive. Particularly useful on the topic of the *Mare Liberum* are Ittersum M.J. van, *Profit and Principle. Hugo Grotius. Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595–1615* (Leiden – Boston: 2006); Haggenmacher P., *Grotius et la doctrine de la guerre juste* (Paris: 1983) 645–672; Roelofsen C.G., "The Freedom of the Seas: An Asian Inspiration for *Mare Liberum*?", in Watkin T.G. (ed.), *Legal records and Historical Reality: Proceedings of the 8th British Legal History* (London: 1989) 51–69. Finally, in terms of the editorial context of Grotius's publications, what follows owes much to the anthology of Meulen J. ter – Diermanse P.J.J., *Bibliographie des écrits sur Hugo Grotius imprimés au XVII^e siècle* (Leiden: 1961).

¹⁶ Bergeron was very familiar with the history of the conflict, which he summarized with reference to the 'articles of this conference in Leiden', in which the debates on the freedom of the seas were recorded. Bergeron P., *Traité de la Navigation et des voyages de découverte et conquête modernes, & principalement des François* (Paris, Jean de Heuqueville: 1629), reprinted in *Voyages faits principalement en Asie dans les XII^e, XIII^e, XIV^e et XV^e siècles* 1 (The Hague, Jean Naulme: 1735) 43.

cateur espagnol was a response.¹⁷ As legal adviser, Grotius was charged with (anonymously) publishing the *Mare Liberum*¹⁸ in 1609,¹⁹ which was originally to be just a chapter of his *De jure praedae commentarius*.²⁰ The work enjoyed immediate success. Close to fifteen years later, in 1625, the controversy was reignited by the publication of the Portuguese Seraphin Freitas's response to Grotius in his *De justo Imperio Lusitanorum Asiatico*.²¹ This context supports the theory that Grotius, who did not want to implicate himself personally in an international controversy, commissioned a protégé from his circle of friends to defend him publicly. Grotius's correspondence attests to the fact that he knew Freitas's work and wanted to respond to it without actually taking on this task himself.²² Bergeron, who had solid legal training and belonged

¹⁷ Walerande J.B. de, *Le Plaidoyer de l'Indien hollandois contre le pretendu pacificateur espagnol* (s.l.: 1608). This pamphlet summarizes the arguments maintained by the Dutch in their refusal to cede to Spanish pressure on the issue of the Indies, but the author does not cite the legal argument of the freedom of the seas.

¹⁸ The first publication was anonymous: *Mare Liberum sive de jure quod Batavis competit ad Indicana commercia dissertatio* (Leiden, Elzevier: 1609). The name of the author appears in the first editions in Dutch (1614) and Latin (1618), according to Ter Meulen – Diermanse, *Bibliographie des écrits sur Hugo Grotius* 24. As soon as it was published, Richard Hakluyt translated excerpts into English (without producing a full English version); Hakluyt R., *The Original Writings and Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, ed. E.M. Germaine Taylor (London: 1935) 498–499. In France, as of 1667, the *Mare Liberum* was often reprinted as an appendix to the *Ius belli ac pacis*.

¹⁹ Given that the United Provinces were in the midst of concluding a truce with Spain in 1609, the anonymous publication of his tract established a justification for a new division of the world and spheres of influence, as well as the freedom of maritime trade.

²⁰ Grotius H., *De Jure praedae commentarius. Ex auctoris codice descripsit et vulgavit* Hamaker H.G. (Leiden: 1868). The historical pretext for the defence of the VOC allowed Grotius to forge his most important conceptions of the ideas of freedom and contract, which he developed in his *De jure praedae commentarius* and which were central to his important work of 1625, *De jure belli ac pacis*.

²¹ Freitas S., *De justo imperio Lusitanorum Asiatico* (Valladolid, Hieronymi Morillo: 1625). Seraphin Freitas (?–1633) was a doctor at the University of Coimbra and later held the chair in canon law at the University of Valladolid. His pamphlet was reprinted as *Do justo imperio asiatico dos portugueses*, ed. Caetano M. and transl. by Meneses M.P. de (Lisbon: 1983). See also Knight W.S.M., "Seraphin Freitas: Critic of 'Mare Liberum'", *Transactions of the Grotius Society* 11 (1925) 1–9.

²² In a letter to his brother William, dated 6 February 1627, Grotius made the following statement (which has been translated): 'The book entitled *De la légitime souveraineté des Portugais* was published in Valladolid in 1625 by the author François Séraphin de Freytas, which methodically responds to my own work on the freedom of the seas, which he attributes to an unknown author. I believe that the first editions of my book, which are the only ones that arrived there, do not include my name. What he writes is quite rigorous, and he deserves a response. A number of people are pushing me to provide one: I say that he to whom this task will be entrusted must be

to the same scholarly network as Grotius, may well have played this role.²³

Significantly, in his *Traité de la Navigation* Bergeron is not satisfied with a simple statement of the arguments²⁴ justifying the freedom of the seas (that is, the context of just war, the invalidity of the papal bulls which, since the sixteenth century, had established the division of the world as well as trade rights between peoples); rather, he confronts the principle claims of the *Mare Liberum* with the arguments of its critic, Freitas. Thus the goal of chapter XXV of the *Traité de la Navigation* was to present the ongoing controversy between the spokesmen of the two rival powers, in order to better inscribe French interests in a Dutch colonial and commercial model.

The Secularization of Colonial Rationale?

Although Bergeron never mentions Grotius by name, he responds systematically to Freitas's arguments, whose own work was presented in the pamphleteering style of symmetrical response. Bergeron contributed to the controversy by contesting the three new bases on which the Portuguese justified their colonial enterprise: 'preoccupation, prescription & possession que l'autre [Grotius] avoit assez refutez'.²⁵ Bergeron

found among our men of the law' ('Prodiit in Hispania Valexoleti liber editus anno 1625. de justo Imperio Lusitanorum Asiatico auctore Francisco Seraphino de Freitas, qui liber ordine respondet meo de Mari libero, cuius auctorem ubique incognitum vocat. Credo quod primae editiones mei libri, quae illuc solae pervenerunt, nomen meum non praeferunt. Scriptum est satis diligens, et vir dignus cui rescribatur. Sunt qui me incitant: ego dico quaerendum ex iudiciis nostris aliquem, cui id muneris delegatur'). Grotius, *Epistolae quotquot* 796.

²³ If there was in fact an agreement between Grotius and Bergeron, Jérôme Bignon was the most likely intermediary between them. At the age of fifteen, Grotius met Bignon during his first trip in 1598, where, following the Dutch ambassador to France, he socialized with the entourage of the Hôtel de Thou.

²⁴ On this point, see Haggemacher P., "Droits subjectifs et système juridique chez Grotius", in Foisneau L. (ed.), *Politique, droit et théologie chez Bodin, Grotius et Hobbes* (Paris: 1997) 73–130.

²⁵ This is best translated as 'prior occupation, prescription and possession, which the other [Grotius] has often refuted'. Prescription, in this context, refers to the adverse possession of territory – that is, possession that is legitimized after a certain period of occupation. Bergeron, *Traité de la Navigation* 87. In chapters IV, X and XIII of the second part of his *De justo Imperio*, Freitas justifies these bases, which were challenged by Grotius in chapters IV, V and VII of his *Mare Liberum*.

was certainly not the first²⁶ to promote the arguments of the *Mare Liberum*, but he was the one who defended the argument for the freedom of the seas most vigorously in France, by contesting the ‘genealogical’ argument of the transfer of ownership of the seas from ‘Noah the Patriarch’ down through the popes.²⁷ The author’s rewriting of the history of colonization presents it as a series of usurpations legalized by the pope, referring to the ‘Inter Caetera’ bull (1493) and the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) which together defined the territorial divisions of colonial empires for nearly two centuries. Bergeron proposes a re-evaluation of the relationship between political and pontifical power, one which is strongly coloured by Gallican nationalism:

[Freitas] also states that what the Spanish & Portuguese undertook to the exclusion of all others, according to the Papal Concession, was met not with complaint from the other Kings and Princes, but rather was accomplished with their full knowledge and their tacit consent, as the pope had urged; without which they would have rejected it. One can respond to this argument that the silence of these Princes, which is taken for tacit consent, had no negative impact on their rights, nor did they consider there to be, as they showed subsequently by the various expeditions they undertook to the Indies.²⁸

As the statement ‘one can respond’ indicates, Pierre Bergeron intervened as a third party in the Grotius-Freitas debate and responded on

²⁶ The first to do so was Welwod W. in his *An Abridgment of all Sea-Lawes* (London, Thomas Man: 1613), according to Meulen – Diermanse, *Bibliographie des écrits sur Hugo Grotius* 23. As opposed to Selden’s *Mare Clausum* (1635), Welwod did not maintain a controversial relationship with the *Mare Liberum*.

²⁷ With the bad faith of the pamphleteer, Bergeron deems pontifical donations legally invalid, and then proceeds to remind the reader that ‘there is another condition established by this bull, which is that through this donation the pope does not intend to imply prejudice against any other Christian prince who may have taken possession of these new territories’ (‘il y a une autre condition en la Bulle à savoir, que le Pape par cette Donation n’entend prejudice à aucun autre Prince Chrétien qui auroit pris possession actuelle de ces terres nouvelles’). Bergeron, *Traité de la Navigation* 92. Aside from the anti-papal argument, Bergeron contested Freitas’ claim that the astrolabe was invented by the Portuguese, citing the famous “Purgatory” prologue from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (canto I, v.22–24), which allegedly attests to its earlier usage.

²⁸ Bergeron, *Traité de la Navigation* 89: ‘[Freitas] dit aussi, que ce que les Espagnols & Portugais, suivant la Concession du Pape, ont entrepris à l’exclusion des autres, ç’a été sans aucune plainte des autres Rois & Princes, mais à leur vû, à leur sù & de leur consentement tacite, y aians esté conviez par le Pape ; à quoi ils n’auroient voulu entendre. [...] Mais à tout cela on peut répondre, que le silence de ces Princes qu’on prend pour un tacite consentement, n’a pû faire prejudice à leurs droits, & ne l’ont ainsi entendu, comme ils ont bien montré depuis, par toutes les expéditions par eux faites aux Indes’.

behalf of the philosopher of natural law in order to better defend... the interests of the French monarchy. His appropriation of the argument for the freedom of the seas effectively promotes the renewal of a French expansionist discourse: for Bergeron, the history of conquest classified by nation was developed precisely to prove that each monarchy potentially had the right to create its own trade companies and to found its own colonies. France's unfortunate colonial past, which for Bergeron was rooted in the disaster of the Hundred Years War, did not mean that the Bourbon monarchy could not pursue expansionist aims in faraway lands.

Bergeron's application of Grotius's argument is undeniably essential to demonstrating its validity. In an extension of the critiques of Las Casas and Vitoria, who denounced the illegitimacy of a particular kind of political domination, and which are used extensively by Bergeron in his Dutch model,²⁹ Grotius's theoretical contributions allow the argument to be taken one step further. The thesis of *Mare Liberum* facilitates the positive beginning of a code of international law, and above all a different conception of colonization which escapes the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church. Though it was in his *De jure belli ac pacis* that Grotius formulated his philosophy of international relations in which God, although far from absent was no longer the supreme authority,³⁰ he had already presented a radical challenge to the legislative power of the papacy in matters of territorial distribution in his *Mare Liberum*, a domain that was thereafter the prerogative of individual nations. The reconstruction of Bergeron's colonial rhetoric illustrates his manipulation of the discourse of Spanish theologians, who formulated a critique of colonization justified by evangelism and thereby challenged the political authority of the papal bulls.³¹ Bergeron

²⁹ Ittersum, *Profit and Principle* 69–77.

³⁰ See, for example, the famous statement that opens his treatise: 'What we have just stated would take place, as it were, even if we were to commit the great sin of conceding either that there is no God, or that He is indifferent to the affairs of men' ('Ce que nous venons de dire aurait lieu en quelque sorte, quand même nous accorderions, ce qui ne peut être concédé sans un grand crime, qu'il n'y a pas de Dieu, ou que les affaires humaines ne sont pas l'objet de ses soins'). Grotius H., *Le Droit de la Guerre et de la Paix*, translated by Pradier-Fodéré P., vol. I (Paris: 1867) 13–14.

³¹ Joseph Perez summarizes the theocratic history of papal donations, which Freitas still defended in 1625. The latter were founded on 'the theory established in the 13th century by the Cardinal-Archbishop of Ostia, Henry of Susa: after Christ's Incarnation, the pagan peoples were assumed to have lost, in law, their political sovereignty; Christ was then assumed to have become master of the world, in law if not in fact,

and Grotius adopted this argument, but rid it of any missionary connotations, replacing them with secular and mercantile justifications. In other words, Bergeron and Grotius's argument separated exactly what the Iberian colonial empires had tried to reconcile: the fusion of commercial and religious imperatives, or 'Christians and spices,' as Vasco de Gama famously replied to the Samorin of Calicut when asked what he had come for.³² If Las Casas, Vitoria and other Spanish Dominicans like Montesinos and Soto emphasized the tension, or even the contradiction between the objectives that motivated the conquest of New America, their critiques allowed for the legitimization of the Indians' *dominium* (sovereignty) by contesting the colonial *imperium*. This scission of the two principles – which were united in the definition of the ancient colonies – was the foundation of a new kind of colonial power, founded primarily on the legal-financial framework of trade companies. The latter enjoyed a particular legitimacy in Bergeron's view, one which, in appearance at least,³³ did not compromise the territorial sovereignty or religious identity of the indigenous people.

Ultimately, Bergeron and Grotius did little more than invert the conclusions of the Spanish Dominicans of the previous century: rather

and he ostensibly transmitted this authority to Saint Peter, and then to his successors, the popes, who could then claim these powers at any time and to grant the lands of infidels to such and such a sovereign. It would thus be a type of feudal investiture. The jurist Palacios Rubios, advisor of the Catholic kings, used this theory in 1512 to justify in law the annexation of Navarra by Castilia. By virtue of this theory, the pope has the right to depose kings and grant their crowns to others' ('la théorie élaborée au XIII^e siècle par le cardinal-archevêque d'Ostie, Henri de Suse : après l'Incarnation du Christ, les peuples païens auraient perdu, en droit, leur souveraineté politique; le Christ serait alors devenu maître du monde, en droit, sinon en fait, et il aurait transmis cette autorité à Saint Pierre, puis aux papes, ses successeurs, qui pouvaient revendiquer à tout moment, ces pouvoirs et disposer des terres des infidèles en faveur de tel ou tel souverain. Il s'agirait donc d'une sorte d'investiture féodale. Le juriste Palacios Rubios, conseiller des Rois Catholiques, se réclame de cette théorie, en 1512, pour justifier en droit l'annexion de la Navarre par la Castille. En vertu de cette théorie, en effet, le pape a le droit de déposer les rois et d'attribuer leur couronne à d'autres'). Perez J., "Conquête et colonisation du Nouveau Monde: la querelle des justes titres chez les penseurs espagnols du XVI^e siècle", in Lauvergnat-Gagnière C. – Yon B. (eds.), *Le Juste et l'injuste à la Renaissance et à l'âge classique* (Saint-Étienne: 1986) 129.

³² See the anonymous account of Vasco de Gama's first voyage: *La Relation du premier voyage aux Indes (1497–1499)*, ed. and transl. Teyssier P. (Paris: 1998) 71.

³³ In reality, the trade companies did not exclude the founding of colonial empires (Dutch, English and French), who used this new legal legitimacy (according to which the evangelical objectives were no longer of paramount importance) as the basis for a new kind of colonial domination. On this point, see Pagden A., *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: 1982) 46–62.

than an escalation of missionary logic, as Las Casas sought, there was a separation or disjunction of religious and commercial objectives of the colonial process. In France, this compartmentalization of the goals of colonization must be understood as an by-product of 'Raison d'Etat', the contemporary emergence of which is perhaps less based on the secularization of the monarchy than on a 're-sacralisation of the State' and its power.³⁴ The nationalist objectives were thus amplified by Bergeron in his interpretation of Grotius and in his admiration of the VOC, which served as theoretical support and as a legal-commercial model to establish France among the colonial empires.

The Objectives and Limits of the VOC Model

Bergeron was obviously not the only one³⁵ to promote the argument for the freedom of the seas or to use it to justify political power; however, a comparison with other royal propaganda serves to highlight the uniqueness of Bergeron's treatise, as well as its solitary status. For example, Cardin Le Bret's *Traité de la Souveraineté du Roy* (1632), which was published slightly earlier than Bergeron's treatise and passes for the paragon of pro-monarchic panegyric, also borrows the argument for freedom of the seas, but with a radically different ideological perspective. Le Bret also maintained that 'the Sea, our Law has held, until the Emperor Justinian, that it be common to all men, just as the air &

³⁴ Phrase used by Courtine J.F. in "L'héritage scolastique dans la problématique théologico-politique de l'âge classique", in Méchoulan H. (ed.), *L'Etat baroque 1610-1652* (Paris: 1985) 96.

³⁵ The same argument can be found during the same period, but attributed to Sully. His practical opposition to all colonial enterprise did not contradict theoretical statements, claiming freedom of maritime routes against Spain. Sully declared that 'it seems appropriate to establish a certain order to the system of navigation, particularly with respect to long-term voyages; that the sea be as open as the earth to all princes, states and nations who invoke the name of Christ, and that they have equality of trade and commerce in all of the Indies and other locations where rare and precious goods can be acquired' ('il semble à propos d'établir un tel ordre au fait de la navigation, et sur tout pour ce qui regarde les voyages de long cours, que la mer soit aussi libre que la terre, à tous les princes, Estats et nations lesquels reclament le nom de Christ, et qu'ils ayent esgalité de trafic et commerce dans toutes les Indes et autres lieux où se peuvent recouvrir les choses rares et precieuses'). Sully (Maximilien de Béthune), *Oeconomies royales* [1632], in Michaud J.F. – Poujoulat J.J.F. (eds.), *Nouvelle Collection des Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de France* (Paris: 1837) 19–20.

other elements,³⁶ but this declaration essentially targeted fishing and salvage rights on the French coast, and was thus not part of a larger expansionist discourse focussed on the faraway shores of the Indian Ocean. Unlike the treatise of Cardin Le Bret, it seems that Bergeron's *Traité de la Navigation* did not meet with favourable reviews upon publication. This can without doubt partly be attributed to the bad relations between Grotius and Richelieu,³⁷ which confronted Bergeron with an impossible choice between the politically motivated dedication of his treatise and the theoretical basis of his argument.

Bergeron's interest in the VOC is of central importance, in that the Dutch company provided him with an alternate model of commercial and colonial development that stood in opposition to the Iberian model of colonial empire. Specifically, the rationale established by Grotius on the freedom of the seas, which brought an end to the division of the seas by papal donation, opened the way for a new type of colonialism, one which was more bourgeois and more strictly and aggressively commercial. This economic success explains Bergeron's awestruck testimony during a trip in 1617 to the chamber of the Amsterdam VOC, which produced the 'grandeur, riches & magnificence' of the city:

But I will end my tour of the marvels of this city with the house, or *Case* of the Indies that they call the Nihur, or site of the mountains. It is a large palace [...], where there are approximately 50 persons who administer the funds of the society of the Indies, which belongs to a number of individuals who have invested their money [...], from which they draw a 6 per cent profit [...]. There is a fund of 640000 florins, or 64 tons of gold. Each ton is one hundred thousand florins, which is divided into a certain number of shares that the investors purchase in the first sale [...]. Amsterdam has half. The cities of Delft, Rotterdam, Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Middelburg and Vlissingen have close to the other half. The financial fund underwrites the negotiations of the company & distributes the profit to those to whom it is due. In order to do this, a

³⁶ 'la Mer, nôtre Jurisprudence a tenu, jusqu'à l'Empereur Justinian, qu'elle étoit commune à tous les hommes, ainsi que l'air & les autres élemens.' Le Bret C., *Traité de la Souveraineté du Roy* [1632], in *Les Oeuvres de Messire Cardin Le Bret, Conseiller ordinaire du Roy en ses Conseils d'Etat et Privé* (Paris, Toussaint du Bray: 1635) 76.

³⁷ It seems that an encounter between the Protestant philosopher and the cardinal went particularly badly: Richelieu tried to prevent Grotius from being named ambassador of the Swedish crown in Paris, whereas the author of *Mare Liberum* never ceased criticizing the cardinal's financial administration (Voltaire borrowed this critique, citing Grotius in his *Essai sur les Mœurs* [1756–1775], ed. Pomeau R. (Paris: 1990) 617. For more on the relationship between Richelieu and Grotius, see Zuber, "La triple jeunesse de Hugo Grotius" 444–445.

fleet of 45 large and well-equipped ships is maintained and sent to the Indies to trade for spices, and not to wage war. Inside there are long halls, both high and low, full of spices, pepper, ginger, cloves, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon and others, that are unloaded there, [...] in the Indies before being distributed everywhere. I've never seen such quantities of these goods, and it seems that all of Europe does not adequately consume it all. These extensive travels to the East Indies have, in recent years, been undertaken solely by this organization.³⁸

However, Bergeron's admiration of the VOC and his appropriation of Grotius's argument had no immediate impact on French colonial policy: we know that Richelieu's colonial program, unlike in the West Indies and Canada, had little influence the East Indies. It was not until 1664 – that is: the generation of Louis XIV and Colbert – that the East Indies and West Indies trading Companies were founded.³⁹ But that is another story which has little to do with the private administration of the VOC and intersects much more closely with the question of French mercantilism. With respect to the resistance to colonial expansion, it must be noted that contrary to the Dutch and English, the majority of the French elite expressed an aversion to maritime trade, which was considered distant and dangerous. The belief in land as the only solid value, defended by the aristocratic code, dominated

³⁸ 'Mais je finiray les merveilles de ceste ville par la maison ou Case d'Indes qu'ils appellent le Nihur, ou lieu des monts. C'est un grand palais [...], ou y a environ 50. [ofhours] ou maitres qui ont l'administration des fonds en masse de l'association des Indes, appartenant à plusieurs particuliers qui mestent la leur argent a profit [...] dont ils tirent profit a 6. pour cent. [...]. Il y a un fonds de 640000 florins ou 64. tonnes d'or. La tonne est de cent mil florins, cela est en un certain nombre de parts que les particuliers achètent en la premiere vente [...]. Amsterdam y a la moitié. Les villes de Delft, Rotterdam, Horne, Enchuse, Midlebourg & Schlessinguen y ont pres d'une autre moitié. Le fond de finance entretient la negociation des Indes & donne le profit a qui il appartient. Ils entretiennent pour cela 45. grands vaisseaux bien equipez qui sont a la société & qui envoient es Indes au trafic des espiceries, & nul pour y trafic & guerre. La deddans y a de longues halles hautes & basses, toutes pleines d'espiceries, de poivre, gingembre, clous de girofle, muscades, maris, canelle & autres, que l'on descharge la, [...] des Indes pour apres les debiter & distribuer par tour. Je ne vy jamais une telle quantité de ces denrées là, & semble que toute l'Europe ne soit pas suffisante au debit & consommation de tout cela. Ces grands voyages des Indes orientales depuis quelques années ont esté entrepris par ceste société seule'. Bergeron P., "Voyage au Provinces Unies, 1617", Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits occidentaux, fr. 24908, f. 63v–64r.

³⁹ On the East Indies Company, see the work of D'Haudrière P., *La Compagnie française des Indes au XVIII^e siècle, 1715–1789*, 4 vols. (Lille: 1989); *Les compagnies des Indes orientales. Trois siècles de rencontre entre Orientaux et Occidentaux, 1600–1858* (Paris: 2006).

in France to the point of creating a real obstacle to any extensive colonial policy.

Ultimately, the model of the VOC testifies as much to the mobility of colonial rationale in modern Europe as to the limits of its transmission and the difficulty of transposing an expansionist ideology onto a radically different context. This model, however, was essentially theoretical; in reality, numerous French expeditions suffered from aggression on the part of VOC ships.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the VOC remained a model of exemplary commercial success in France, as is demonstrated by the 1665 *Discours d'un fidele sujet du Roy touchant l'establissement d'une Compagnie françoise pour le Commerce des Indes Orientales*, which borrows the arguments developed thirty years earlier by Bergeron.⁴¹ The author celebrates Colbert's commercial program by highlighting his debt to the Dutch model which 'freed' the seas from Iberian dominance:

Be that as it may, this Company has become very powerful in the Indies, where it has maintained numerous counters under two principal Directors, or Presidents, one of whom resides in Surat & the other in Bantam; [...]; And that their enemies have made serious efforts to destroy them; & though this led to an open and bloody war, they reaped only shame and did not succeed in preventing them from pursuing their exploration, which they had no right to prevent.⁴²

⁴⁰ Aside from Vitre's account, previously cited, the connection between August de Beaulieu and Aceh in 1622 also testifies to the numerous skirmishes with the VOC. See Beaulieu A. de, *Mémoires d'un voyage aux Indes Orientales (1619–1622)*. Augustin de Beaulieu. *Un marchand normand à Sumatra*, ed. D. Lombard (Paris: 1996) 231–233.

⁴¹ It should also be noted that the first director of the East Indies Company was François de Caron, a Huguenot who had already worked for the VOC for some thirty years. Conversely, the case of Jean Guidon de Chambrelle indicates the presence of French mercenaries in the VOC; see Cruysse D. van der, *Mercenaires français de la VOC: la route des Indes hollandaises* (Paris: 2003). Beyond the scope of this article, the close ties between the two companies warrant a more detailed examination.

⁴² 'Quoy qu'il en soit, cette Compagnie s'est renduë fort puissante dans les Indes, où elle a maintenu divers comptoirs sous deux Directeurs principaux ou Presidens, dont l'un fait sa residence à Surat, & l'autre à Bantam; [...]; Et bien que leurs ennemis ayent fait les derniers efforts pour les destruire; & en soient venus jusqu'à une guerre ouverte & tres-sanglante, ils n'en ont remporté le plus souvent que de la honte, & ne les ont point empeschez de continuer leurs navigations, dont ils n'avoient pas droit de les exclure'. *Discours d'un fidele sujet du Roy touchant l'establissement d'une Compagnie françoise pour le Commerce des Indes Orientales* (Paris: 1665; attributed to François Charpentier) 15–16.

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‘AUS DEN FÜRNEMBSTEN INDIANISCHEN
REISEBESCHREIBUNGEN ZUSAMMENGEZOGEN’.
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT INDIA IN EARLY
MODERN GERMANY

Antje Flüchter

At the court of the Mughal, women played a very special and important role. They had great influence on the Mughal’s political decisions, forming, basically, the ‘Staatsrath’, and having titles such as *Prime Minister*, *Vice-King* or *Secretary*. Even stranger, the Mughal had a bodyguard of Tartarian women, who were armed with bows and sabres. This information can be found in the article ‘Mogul’ in the volume 92 of Johann Georg Krünitz’s *Ökonomisch-technologische Encyclopädie*, published in 1803.¹ Any knowledge which found its way into memory media such as encyclopaedias was widely accepted as accurate. Encyclopaedias transformed information into socially accepted truth. For contemporaries the story about a female guard was credible and represented the strange and oriental character of the Mughal court. But where does this story, about a female guard, which we nowadays would consider incredible, come from? A similar description can be found in Erasmus Francisci’s *Lust- und Statsgarten*, an earlier type of encyclopaedia published in 1668. Shah Jahan, as we read there, had no men in his palace, but only female bodyguards. Women were on guard inside the palace, armed with ‘male’ weapons.² Erasmus Francisci culled this information from travellers and their reports. Travel accounts were an important source of new information from non-European countries.

¹ Krünitz J.G., *Ökonomisch-technologische Encyclopädie oder allgemeines System der Staats-, Stadt-, Haus- und Land-Wirthschaft, und der Kunst-Geschichte, in alphabetischer Ordnung*, vol. 92 (Berlin: 1803) 601–602. My special thanks to Andreas Pietsch for discussing this paper.

² ‘Inwendig hielten die Frauen Wache/und dienten ihm/mit ihrem männlichen Waffen/für Leib-Trabanten; strafften auch einander selbst ab/wenn sie mißgehandelt’, in: Francisci E., *Ost- und West-Indischer wie auch Sinesischer Lust- und Statsgarten [...]; in drey Haupt-Theile unterschieden. [...] Aus den fürnembsten/alten und neuen/Indianischen Geschich-Land- und Reisebeschreibungen/mit Fleiß zusammengezogen/und auf annehmliche Unterredungs-Art eingerichtet* (Nürnberg, Endter: 1668) 1444.

From our current perspective Portuguese and later English travel accounts would be the most likely sources for this kind of information. However, in German speaking territories and during the Early Modern period the Dutch VOC was more important for firsthand knowledge about India and Asia in general, a fact almost forgotten nowadays in the German cultural memory. For a long time, the VOC was not only the most important European power in the European-Asian encounters,³ but also gave many Germans an opportunity to visit Asia.⁴ Particularly during the seventeenth century, a huge migration from German speaking territories took place to the Netherlands and beyond. Cord Eberspächter estimates that two thirds of the VOC-employees were of German origin, numbering between 200,000 to 300,000 men.⁵ Many of these people not only travelled to Asia with the VOC, but wrote travelogues afterwards. In this way, the VOC provided first-hand information about the East Indies and that knowledge thus gained formed the basis for a broader knowledge system about Asia in Germany. The female bodyguard is also mentioned in travel accounts, but, and this is important for the process of producing and saving knowledge, in a different location. The female guard was mostly not located at the Mughal's court in India, but at the court of the king of Mataram, who was the hegemonic power of Java for a long time. Johann Jacob Ebert mentioned the king's female bodyguard in his book about Batavia, at the end of the eighteenth century as a 'Merckwürdigkeit',⁶ a curious or strange thing. In the seventeenth century several German VOC-employees, who published their memoirs, mentioned this guard in Mataram. Jürgen Andersen from Schleswig-Holstein wrote that the king of Mataram did not have a typical bodyguard, but one consisting of 1200 women; every night 400 of them were on guard.⁷ Another German travel account reports an

³ Gaastra F.S., *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline* (Zutphen: 2003).

⁴ Gelder R. van, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur. Duitsers in dienst van de VOC (1600–1800)* (Nijmegen: 1997).

⁵ Eberspächter C., "Abenteurer oder Gastarbeiter? Deutsche Bedienstete in den niederländischen Überseecompanien im 17. und 18. Jh.," in Boer D.E.H. de – Gleba G. – Holbach R. (eds.), '...in guete freuntlichen nachbarlichen verwantnus und hantierung...' *Wanderung von Personen, Verbreitung von Ideen, Austausch von Waren in den niederländischen und deutschen Küstenregionen vom 13.-18. Jahrhundert* (Oldenburg: 2001) 425–441, esp. 428.

⁶ Ebert J.J., *Beschreibung und Geschichte der Hauptstadt in dem Holländischen Ostindien Batavia. Nebst geographischen, politischen und physikalischen Nachrichten von der Insel Java. Aus dem Holländischen übersetzt*, vol. I (Leipzig, Weidmann Erben und Reich: 1785) 88.

⁷ Andersen J. – Iversen V., *Orientalische Reise-Beschreibungen. In der Bearbeitung von Adam Olearius, (Schleswig: 1669), newly published by Dieter Lohmeier* (Tübingen: 1980) 12.

even higher number: 10,000 armed females would guard the king's palace in Mataram.⁸ If the king's court in Mataram or on Java was described in travel accounts in more detail, this female guard had to be mentioned.

In this paper two issues will be dealt with. Firstly, several related questions – how knowledge about Asia was produced in the seventeenth century and what impact the Dutch VOC had on knowledge production in German speaking countries; what was considered noteworthy in the travel accounts; and what information about India, reported by VOC-employees was included in German discourses on Asia in the seventeenth century. Secondly, the question of how knowledge about Asia was transformed into socially accepted truth and which elements were transferred into eighteenth century discourse.

Many elements of this knowledge were changed or forgotten during the transformation from empirically gained knowledge into knowledge stored in memory media like encyclopaedias. The narrative of a female bodyguard, for instance, can be found in several travel accounts from Asia in the seventeenth century; it became a part of the topic reservoir of these texts. It was a narrative which represented alterity, the difference between Europe and Asia. In the process of transformation from “individually” produced knowledge written down in travelogues into broadly accepted truth stored in memory media, the female guard from Mataram was – wrongly – relocated to the Mughal court in India. For the eighteenth-century audience this was not problematic, because the guard fitted very well into the image of oriental monarchy or despotism, of which the Indian Mughal court was a prime example.

Knowledge, its Construction and its Media

‘Knowledge’ is a social construction of reality, which is widely approved and accepted as true and real.⁹ The organisation of knowledge is never

⁸ Hoffmann J.C., *Reise nach dem Kaplande, nach Mauritius und nach Java: 1671–1676* (The Hague: 1931) 68. In some Dutch historiography about the VOC, the female bodyguards were situated at the court of the Sultan of Aceh, cf. the illustration in: Goor J. van, *Prelude to Colonialism: the Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum: 2004) 31.

⁹ Cf. Landwehr A., “Einleitung: Geschichte(n) der Wirklichkeit”, in: Landwehr A. (ed.), *Geschichte(n) der Wirklichkeit. Beiträge zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des Wissens* (Augsburg: 2002) 9–27.

neutral or arbitrary, but mirrors the author's worldview, the cultural patterns of how s/he interprets the world.¹⁰ Nevertheless, knowledge understood as a cultural phenomenon is not only a mirror of social formations and patterns of world understanding, it also generates new meanings. Knowledge allocates meaning or esteem to things, persons, and social formations;¹¹ knowledge and experience are interlocked. Travel accounts and other narratives about India do not only mirror the author's culturally shaped views, but they – if accepted as knowledge and as truth – structure future travellers' experiences in India. They shape the modes through which people perceive, think and act. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, knowledge from the world outside Europe reached people in Europe mainly through travel accounts. Travelogues were bestsellers in the seventeenth century. Typographical masterpieces about the New World and European exploration of the East were produced in the sixteenth century;¹² during the seventeenth century and in the context of growing literacy, the production of books became more differentiated. In many countries, publishers followed the example of the Venetian compiler Giovanni Battista Ramusio, who had started to publish a collection of travel accounts in 1550: Purchas in England, Melchisédech Thévenot in France and Theodor de Bry and Levinus Hulsius for the German speaking territories.¹³ The first knowledge about Dutch activities in Asia and, more specifically India reached the German audience in the form of the compilations by De Bry and Hulsius.¹⁴ Theodor de Bry published Linschoten's powerful *Itinerario* in Latin and German in volumes II, III, and IV of his *Petits voyages* (1598–1600). He and Levinus Hulsius published translations of the voyages by De Houtman, Van Neck, Van

¹⁰ This interdependence is mostly stressed in the context of encyclopaedias, but for travel accounts and other narrative sources, it also needs to be considered, cf. Burke P., *A Social History of Knowledge. From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge UK.: 2000).

¹¹ Cf. Landwehr A., "Das Sichtbare sichtbar machen. Annäherung an 'Wissen' als Kategorie historischer Forschung", in Landwehr, *Geschichte(n) der Wirklichkeit* 61–89, 87.

¹² Cf. Lach D.F., *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. I: *The Century of Discovery* (Chicago – London: 1965) 148–151.

¹³ Cf. Lach D.F. – Kley E.J. van, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III: *A Century of Advance, Book One: Trade, Missions, Literature* (Chicago – London: 1993) 301–305.

¹⁴ Cf. Steffen-Schrade J., "Ethnographische Illustrationen zwischen Propaganda und Unterhaltung. Ein Vergleich der Reisesammlungen von De Bry und Hulsius", in Burghartz S. (ed.), *Insenierte Welten – Staging New Worlds. De Bry's Illustrated Travel Reports 1590–1630* (Basel: 2004) 157–195. Groesen M. van, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634)* (Leiden: 2008).

Warwijck, Gerrit de Veer, Harmenszoon, Van Heemskerck, Van der Haghen and others.¹⁵ In 1612, however, Johann Verken's report was published by De Bry and by Hulsius, the first published travel account by a German VOC-employee. Even when the many descriptions and elements of already published texts were interlarded, Donald F. Lach gives Verken the credit of 'quite detailed and obviously firsthand observations'.¹⁶ During the Thirty Years' War, only few books about Asia were published in Germany, but in the second half of the seventeenth century the production increased again. At first, the editions continued to be small and consisted mainly of reprints and translations from other languages, but after the middle of the seventeenth century increasingly travel accounts written by Germans who had travelled as simple soldiers or sailors with the VOC were published.¹⁷ The fact that many of them, returning from Asia easily found a publisher for their reports, proves that there was a market for these products. However, most of these travel accounts were not republished, serving for a short period as a sop for the public's curiosity – a curiosity about the 'latest' news from Asia. The fact that German books about Asia from the seventeenth century were often cheaply printed¹⁸ also means that these books reached a broader audience. There are, of course, still huge, impressive folio volumes, but the accounts of most VOC-employees were usually published as small books that could be easily carried anywhere.¹⁹

A special interest in travel books already existed before the eighteenth century and before the Enlightenment, although the eighteenth century book market was more developed than before the Enlightenment because the range of academic knowledge was broader. However, travelogues are a special kind of literature and a special form of knowledge production. It is often assumed, that the new habitus of the enlightened traveller changed the traveller from a dilettante

¹⁵ Cf. Lach – Kley, *Asia* III 515–520.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 519.

¹⁷ Roelof van Gelder counts 47 published accounts of German VOC-employees. Their reports only rarely contained really new knowledge about India to Europe, but some of these reports show a critical view on the Dutch activities in Asia, cf. Lach – Kley, *Asia* III 529; also Dharampal-Frick G., *Indien im Spiegel deutscher Quellen der frühen Neuzeit (1500–1750). Studien zu einer interkulturellen Konstellation* (Tübingen: 1994).

¹⁸ Lach – Kley, *Asia* III 510.

¹⁹ The connection between materiality and form of travel accounts and the intended audience still needs more research. For example, the edition of Hoffmann's account is small and handy, while Adam Olearius published his work in folio volumes.

wanderer into an academically trained researcher, and – even more significant – that empirically gained knowledge became more important as proof of reported facts than what was stated in classic texts.²⁰ This was not a simple development. Authors of seventeenth-century travel accounts also claimed that they only wrote about topics they had experienced themselves or at least had heard about from trustworthy people.²¹ Nevertheless, it is clear that travelogues, as a particular kind of literature, followed specific rules, and had to meet the readers' expectations, and could not simply report what the author had experienced.²² For example, monsters, which had inhabited medieval travel accounts, were no longer accepted as truth in the seventeenth century and therefore disappeared from representations of India, while other *topoi* needed to be touched on to gain the reader's trust. There was, for example, no travel account about India without a description of a widow being burned in it. Somebody who could not describe such an event was not believed to have been to India; traditional *topoi* proved the empirical 'truth' of a report.

Further, many of the Germans who had travelled with the VOC were of rather a simple origin and not well educated. The result was that we have texts from a social group that only rarely left any kind of ego documents. This also means that they were often revised before publication to fulfil readers' expectations. Sometimes this was done by a friend of the author²³ or by somebody such as Adam Olearius, the librarian of Duke Friedrich III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf, who published several travel accounts: his own accounts of embassies to Persia and Moscow, Johann Albrecht of Mandelslo's travels to and

²⁰ Cf. Lüsebrinck H.-J., "Wissen und außereuropäische Erfahrung im 18. Jahrhundert", in Dülmen R. van – Rauschenbach S. (eds.), *Macht des Wissens. Die Entstehung der modernen Wissensgesellschaft* (Cologne – Weimar: 2004) 629–654, 642; Schneider U.J., "Bücher als Wissensmaschinen", in: Schneider U.J. (ed.), *Seine Welt Wissen. Enzyklopädien in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Darmstadt: 2006) 9–20, 11.

²¹ Banerjee P., *Burning Women. Widows, Witches, and Early Modern European Travellers in India* (New York: 2003).

²² Cf. Burghartz S., "Translating Seen into Scene?" Wahrnehmung und Repräsentation in der frühen Kolonialgeschichte Europas", in: Burghartz S. – Christadler M. – Nolde D. (eds.), *Berichten – Erzählen – Beherrschen. Wahrnehmen und Repräsentation in der frühen Kolonialgeschichte Europas* (Frankfurt a. M.: 2003) 161–175.

²³ For example, Johann Jacob Saar was helped with his edition by his friend Daniel Wülfer, pastor of St. Lorentz church in Nuremberg, foreword Naber in: Saar J.J., *Reise nach Java, Banda, Ceylon und Persien. 1644–1660. Neu herausgegeben nach der zu Nürnberg im Verlag von Johann Daniel Tauber (1672)*, ed. S.P. l'Honoré Naber (The Hague: 1930) XII.

in India, and finally the reports of VOC-employees Jürgen Andersen and Volquart Iversen, who both came from the same dukedom. While other German travel accounts had often only one edition, Olearius's publications and editions saw many more. Mandelslo's report became one of the most published travelogues in the seventeenth century,²⁴ and Andersen's and Iversen's travelogues were translated into Dutch. Although his contemporaries bought and loved the travelogues published by Olearius, historians in the twentieth century had a different opinion of his work. When Honoré Naber published travel accounts by German VOC-employees in the 1930s he decided against Andersen's and Iversen's texts, because it was impossible for him to distinguish between their observations and Olearius's additions.²⁵

India in seventeenth-century German travel accounts

The first Dutch ships, following the information contained in Linschoten's *Itinerario*, tried to avoid the strongholds of Portuguese power in India. They encountered a multitude of smaller and more powerful 'indigenous' territories on the Indian coast and the Indonesian islands – and last but not least – the powerful Mughal empire which had reached the West Indian coast several years earlier. Most of the analysed travel accounts cover only the coastal states, because most VOC-employees only visited these and did not penetrate further into the subcontinent.

²⁴ Schleswig 1645, 1647, 1658, 1668, parts of it were published in travel compilations, too; there were also many translations, for example, 1658 into Dutch, 1719, 1727, and 1737 into French.

²⁵ Cf. his foreword to Merklein J.J., *Reise nach Java, Vorder- und Hinter-Indien, China und Japan (1644–1653)*, ed. S.P. l'Honoré Naber (The Hague: 1930) VIII. The extent of Olearius's intrusion is very clear, if one compares the published version with the edition of the original journal published by Margarete Refslund-Klemann: *Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo's Journal und Observation (1637–1640)* (Kopenhagen: 1942); *Des Hoch-Edelgeborhrnen Johann Albrechts von Mandelslo Morgenländische Reise-Beschreibung: worinnen zugleich die Gelegenheit und heutiger Zustandt etlicher fürnehmen indianischen Länder, Provintzien, Städte und Insulen [...] beschrieben werden/ heraußgegeben durch Adam Olearium...* (Hamburg, Hertel und Wiering: 1696). Nevertheless, for a different judgment of Andersen's and Iversen's reports, cf. Harbsmeier M., "Other Worlds and the Self in the 17th century German Travel Accounts", in Greyerz K. von – Medick H. – Veit P. (eds.), *Von der dargestellten Person zum erinnerten Ich: europäische Selbstzeugnisse als historische Quellen (1500–1850)* (Cologne-Weimar-Vienna: 2001). H. den Besten maintains that Olearius did not tamper with Andersen's description of Africa, "Jürgen Andersen's Orientalische Reise-Beschreibung. A forgotten Travelogue", *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 58 (2004) 57–67, 58–59.

Consequently, the image drawn in the travel accounts was rather that of a network of powers with changing allies and without a clear hegemonic centre. For the perception of India and the production of knowledge about India, it is important to stress, that the image of India during the seventeenth century was not structured by the dichotomy European – Indian! It was characteristic of the first Dutch attempts to obtain access to the Indian markets, that they were confronted with European rivals rather than with Asian enmity. Other Europeans tried to damage their reputation as possible trading partners with slander-ing statements or fought them openly. In an account of the voyage of Admiral Wolfert Harmenszoon, published in 1606 in German by Hulsius, we read that the Portuguese wrote a letter to the king of Ternate, in Indonesia, stating that the Dutch were bad people, without God, justice and truth. On top of that they were sodomites, and because of this moral flaw they were despised in all islands in the East.²⁶ Some years later Verken reported similar stories originating from early English traders in modern day Indonesia. It is significant, that the English narrative differed from the Portuguese one. They explained to the King of Banda in Indonesia, that the Dutch were not really powerful, but of only minor importance. Their own king though, the English king, was a mighty king – compared to him the Dutch were nothing. As a consequence it would be much wiser for the people of Banda to trade with the English than with the Dutch.²⁷ These examples prove that the European experience and interaction in Asia was not only important for knowledge about this part of the world, but also shaped mutual European perceptions.

Because most of the German VOC-employees were enlisted as soldiers, we find detailed descriptions of battles and different other kinds of military actions.²⁸ During the first decades of the seventeenth

²⁶ That the Dutch ‘böse Leute weren/ohne Gott/Recht und Wahrheit’. Further, the messenger told the King of Ternate, ‘daß sie wie die Sodomitischen vnderinander Vnzucht trieben’ and therefore ‘in allen Orientalischen Inseln sie verlästern’. Hulsius L., *8. Schifffahrt: Kurze Beschreibung, was sich mit den Holländern und Seeländern, in den Ost-Indien, die nächst verlauffene vier oder fünf Jahre, als Anno 1599. 1600. 1601. 1602. und 1603. zugetragen wie sie sich etlich mal mit den Portugesern vnd Hispaniern geschlagen [...]*, (Frankfurt a.M.: 1605) 29.

²⁷ Verken J., *Molukkenreise. 1607–1612. Neu herausgegeben nach der zu Franckfurt am Main im Verlag Joh. Th. de Bry im Jahre 1612 erschienenen Original-Ausgabe*, ed. S.P. l’Honoré Naber (The Hague: 1930) 97.

²⁸ The military descriptions are very detailed in the accounts of Saar, *Reise* and Herport A., *Reise nach Java, Formosa, Vorder-Indien und Ceylon (1659–1668)*, ed. S.P. l’Honoré Naber, (The Hague: 1930).

century, many battles were fought between Europeans, particularly between the Dutch and the Portuguese, while later on the Dutch-English competition became important. Johann Verken for instance gave detailed descriptions of battles with the Portuguese in Mozambique.²⁹ During the course of the century, Asian actors became essential for the outcome of battles. This coincided with more aggressive action by the Dutch against the Portuguese. Johann Verken describes in great detail the fighting and siege of the Portuguese fort in the harbour town Malacca. This description – written from a Dutch perspective and as a result, of course, showing how brave their soldiers were in comparison with the Portuguese – is remarkable for the multitude of actors and alliances in the early decades of the seventeenth century:³⁰ The Dutch planned to conquer the Portuguese Fort. However, as their naval and military power was not sufficient, they had to negotiate with the King of Djohor for naval support. The second day a new group joined the battle, 15 frigates full of ‘Morischer Seerauber’, Moorish pirates, who joined the Dutch because they were enemies of the Portuguese. Yet they could not capture the fort, because the King of Djohor did not want to support the Dutch (this time!). Instead, they started to negotiate about the release of prisoners with the Portuguese and left. Contrary to a common belief that the Europeans took over the leading position just after their arrival in India, another story published by Hulsius showed the military superiority of even less important Indian rulers against Europeans. In 1604, several Dutch ships arrived at the harbour town Cananore on the west coast of India. The Portuguese had established a close relationship with the local king, amongst other things because he was an enemy of the Samodrin of Calicut, the most important ruler at the Indian west coast. When the Dutch ships arrived at the harbour, they were expected: Portuguese frigates awaited them and opened fire. The Moorish garrison of the castle observed the battle, but did not intervene. The king’s opinion about European power became even clearer the next day in a message brought to Steven van der Haghen, the admiral of the Dutch fleet. The king assumed the Dutch wanted to attack his castle, and he warned them strictly against doing so. It would be better to leave his harbour than threaten his friendship by their action. He wrote about the Portuguese that he and his predecessors had protected them for 102 years and that he intended to act in

²⁹ Cf. Verken, *Molukkenreise* 24, 34.

³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 47–54.

the same way in the future.³¹ The king of Cananore was not impressed by the military power of the Europeans. He described himself as the protector of and not as protected by the Portuguese. The Dutch on their account were so impressed by this fact that they left without trying to challenge this Indian force. Asian rulers were not so powerful everywhere, and in the course of time, the stories about victorious Dutch campaigns increased as well as reports about massacres on some islands, such as Banda, where the inhabitants had dared to sell their spices to European competitors of the Dutch.³² But it did not start out this way, and that is important to stress. Asian rulers as well as Asian armies, by land and by sea, were depicted as playing an active and important role in travel accounts. They were not overpowered simply by the arrival of European ships, soldiers or canons, but they were described as part of a multilateral network, in which the Dutch looked for allies.

The narratives about military interactions were complemented by descriptions of diplomatic actions. European actors tried to find allies when they arrived in Asia, allies against other European nations and allies to obtain access to the Asian markets. As ambassadors or negotiators, the Europeans participated in ceremonial interactions at the Asian courts. Within this context, ceremonial practice is often explained and described in detail. One aim of Admiral Steven van

³¹ 'Die Mohren haben zugesehen/vnd sich weder deß einen/noch deß andern Theils im geringsten angenommen. [...] König habe viel vor der Zeit von ihnen/den Holl- vnnnd Seeländern hörensagen/fürnemblich aber/daß sie der Portugeser abgessagte Feinde wären: daß ers dafür gehalten/nach dem sie so nahe vnter das Schloß sich geläget/sie weren vorhabens gemeltes Schloß anzugreifen vnd zu beschädigen/welches er vor dißmal ihnen nicht raten wollte/in Warnemmung/es sehr starck/vnd mit allerley Nothturfft wol versehen were. Neben dem/daß er vnd seine Vorfahrn die Portugeser nunmehr in die 102 Jahr beschützt und gehandhabet/welches er hinfüro auch zu tun gemeynet. Rieth ihnen demnach/daß sie sich darvon mächten/vnd nicht allein/(wofern sie seine Freunde seyn wollten) dem Schloß keinen Schaden zufügen/sondern keine seiner Insuln/Maldiuien/noch Schiff angreifen. Dargegen wollte er sich als ein Freund gegen den ihrigen erzeigen'. Cf. Hagen S. van, *Neundte Schiffart, Das ist: Gründliche Erklärung, was sich mit den Holl- und Seeländern in Ost-Indien Anno 1604. und 1605. unter dem Admiral Steffan von der Hagen zugetragen, und wie sie endlich in jüngst abgelaufenem April mit zwei Schiffen in Holland angekommen* (Frankfurt a. M., Hulsius: 1612) 29–30.

³² Johann Jacob Merklein, for instance, wrote about the Banda Islands and a Dutch revenge campaign after a so-called revolt. Merklein, *Reise* 26; Johann Sigmund Wurffbain described similar events on Amboina, including the destruction of villages, castles and clove trees by fire and the execution of thousands of perfidious inhabitants, ('vieler tausend treuloser Amboineser'). Wurffbain J.S., *Reisen nach den Molukken und Vorder-Indien (1632–1646)*, ed. S.P. l'Honoré Naber (The Hague: 1931), vol. II, 73.

der Haghen's first voyage to India in 1604 and 1605 was to come to an agreement with the Samodrin of Calicut. Calicut, the port town where Vasco da Gama reached India, was an important power on the Indian west coast. Because of rivalry with the Portuguese, this kingdom lost some power, but this rivalry also made Calicut a natural ally for the Dutch. These negotiations with the Samodrin of Calicut are described in detail in Hulsius's ninth volume and this text shows the perceived importance of this ruler.³³ After many Portuguese ships had tried to prevent the Dutch from reaching the Samudrin, they were finally guided to the king's camp by some of his counsellors. Here, they negotiated with the 'Keyser von Malabar, König von Calicut', that is the emperor of the Malabar Coast and the king of Calicut, about an everlasting peace. The report in Hulsius's compilation – a translation from the Dutch – is full of praise for Dutch virtues, but apart from that, the description of the ceremonial interactions shows mutual esteem.³⁴

Descriptions of noble festivities and pompous ceremonies at European courts were a favourite topic in the European media. For this reason the Indian court and its ceremonies were a topic in travel accounts. Because the rather small coastal kingdoms could not satisfy the European audience's curiosity in the long term, the interest shifted

³³ Hagen, *Neundte Schifffahrt* 30–33. This report was not published in Dutch before 1645 and perhaps even that was a re-translation from the German; cf. Lach – Kley, *Asia* III 517.

³⁴ Not only were the negotiations with 'stattlichem Gepräng beschehen', also: 'Nachmals hatz er einen ewigen Frieden mit ihnen auffgerichtet/welcher beyder-seits offentlichen vnnd mit allen Solenniteten vnd Zierlichkeiten ist durch den Eyd bestätigt', Hagen, *Neundte Schifffahrt* 32. About ceremonial and symbolic communication, cf. Stollberg-Rilinger B., "Zeremoniell, Ritual, Symbol. Neue Forschungen zur symbolischen Kommunikation in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit", *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 27 (2000) 389–405. According to European diplomatic practice, it was considered very important who negotiated. Accordingly the Dutch admiral insisted that he talked with the king of Petenim personally and not with an ambassador. In that negotiation, the Dutch admiral is portrayed as the dominant actor: the king fell to his knees, the admiral elevated him, the king cried and he took an oath not to wage any more war against the Dutch; see Herport, *Reise* 152. The European reader could recognise all the elements of a *deditio* in this *description*, cf. Althoff G., "Das Privileg der *deditio*. Formen gütlicher Konfliktbeendigung in der mittelalterlichen Adelsgesellschaft", in Althoff G., *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter. Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: 1997) 99–125; Schwob A. – Schwob U. M., "Von der Ungnade zur Gnade. Zur Inszenierung der mittelalterlichen *deditio* in Oswalds von Wolkenstein Lied 'Durch aubenteuer tal und perg' (Kl.26)", in Pümpel-Mader M. – Schönherr B. (eds.), *Sprache – Kultur – Geschichte. Sprachhistorische Studien zum Deutschen, Hans Moser zum 60. Geburtstag* (Innsbruck: 1999) 101–114.

to the Mughal court, the court of one of the mightiest and richest kings worldwide – as is mentioned again and again in the travel accounts. However, even if the Mughal empire had become more important for the VOC in the course of the seventeenth century, the lower ranking VOC-employees hardly travelled to this court. Some reports mentioned how rich and powerful the Mughal empire was,³⁵ but longer descriptions of the Mughal court, its political actions and ceremonies can hardly be found in the German travel accounts. Adam Olearius, the editor of many Oriental travel accounts, complained that only a few reports about the Mughal court existed in German.³⁶ Accordingly, he fleshed out the accounts that were published by himself. In Jürgen Andersen's report there are long descriptions of the Mughal's palaces in Agra, his differentiated administration and descriptions about his huge court,³⁷ which was unparalleled all over the Orient – with 12,000 servants, 1,200 women and 600 eunuchs. He also described the procession and Shah Jahan's *adventus* in detail; the nearly devout acclamation of his subjects, fights between animals and between animals and men, which remind the reader of performances in Roman circuses. This description of Mughal rule in more than ten pages in a big folio volume is so colourful and detailed that one can hardly compare it with the other VOC-reports, written by German VOC-employees. Nevertheless, there is a similar description in Johann Albrecht Mandelslo's travel account, published by the same Olearius, which is missing in the original journal (as published by Margarete Refslund-Klemann).³⁸ Probably Adam Olearius got at least part of this description from other already published texts and added them to Mandelslo's account.³⁹ These narratives had a huge impact on the German discourse about

³⁵ For example Albrecht Herport called the Mughal the mightiest king of India and Persia, who is even feared by the Turkish king: 'Dieser Mogol ist der großmächtigste König, vber gantz Indien vnd Persien, vor deme sich auch der Türkische Keyser selbst fürchten muß', Herport, *Reise* 116.

³⁶ Mandelslo, *Morgenländische Reise-Beschreibung* 60.

³⁷ Andersen, *Orientalische Reise-Beschreibungen* 34–45.

³⁸ Refslund-Klemann, *Journal* 185v.

³⁹ Besides early English reports about the Mughal court, many compilations refer to De Laet, *De Imperio Magnis Mogolis* (1631) and Pelsaerts, *Remonstratie*; cf. Lach – Kley, *Asia* III 451. Olfert Dapper's descriptions of scenes from the Mughal court are very similar to the ones Olearius published, so both must have had the same source: Dapper O., *Asia, Oder: Ausführliche Beschreibung Des Reichs des Grossen Mogols Und eines grossen Theils Von Indien* [...] *Nebenst einer vollkommenen Vorstellung Des Königreichs Persien, [...] und anderer benachbarten Länder* (Nürnberg, Hoffmann: 1681).

India especially because Erasmus Francisci culled from Olearius's publication for the description of the Mughal court in his encyclopaedia *Ost- und West-Indischer wie auch Sinesischer Lust- und Statsgarten*.

Besides Olearius's publications, only Johann Sigmund Wurffbain wrote in more detail about the Mughal, his family and his court.⁴⁰ However, Wurffbain was more or less an exception within the group of German VOC-employees, because he came from a good family in Nuremberg, was well educated, and succeeded in rising in rank from a simple VOC soldier to a senior merchant. He revised and augmented his travel reports thoroughly afterwards and added many details from already published sources.⁴¹

*Knowledge about India in the Eighteenth Century:
Encyclopaedias as Memory Media*

The Dutch Colonial past as well as the VOC's relevance for German work migration in the seventeenth century is nowadays more or less forgotten in Germany. How did this happen? To answer this question, the second part of this paper analyses what parts of the produced knowledge found their way into encyclopaedias. The incorporation of knowledge or of some of the narrative elements in memory media like encyclopaedias was an important step on the way to a generally accepted representation of reality.

In the following paragraphs, I want to use *Zedlers Universallexicon* as a test case, to see whether the VOC, or rather knowledge produced by her employees, had still an impact on the knowledge about India in German discourse in late eighteenth century. The *Zedler* is an encyclopaedia of a particular kind, older than the famous *Encyclopédie*, and more a predecessor of the Enlightenment than being enlightened itself. This compendium *sui generis* is still awaiting systematic research, but it can safely be said that it mirrors general knowledge in Germany during the first half of the eighteenth century in a special way.⁴²

⁴⁰ Wurffbain J.S., *Joh. Sigmund Wurffbains Vierzehnen Jährige Ost-Indianische Krieg- und Ober-Kauffmanns-Dienste/In einem richtig geführten Journal- und Tage-Buch [...] endlich an den Tag gelegt Von J. P. W. D.* (Nürnberg, Endter-Sultzbach – Lichtenthaler: 1686) 132–136.

⁴¹ Lach – Kley, *Asia* III 523–524.

⁴² The best publications about Zedler are the many papers by Ulrich Johannes Schneider, e.g. "Zedlers Universal-Lexicon und die Gelehrtenkultur des 18. Jahrhunderts", in Döring D. – Martin H. (eds.), *Die Universität Leipzig und ihr gelehrtes Umfeld*

Moreover, it is a very fruitful object of such a kind of investigation, because in most of the articles the reference titles are mentioned, which makes it possible to trace the construction of knowledge.

The image of the VOC, as outlined in *Zedler*, reveals its authors still full of admiration for the company. It is true that the VOC's decline had already started at the end of the seventeenth century, but the European public had not noticed this. As a result, in the rather long article 'Indien' (India) in *Zedler*, volume 14, published in 1739, the Portuguese and the Dutch are still mentioned as the most important European powers. In the article, there is an outline of how the Dutch came to the East Indies, drove the Portuguese and the Spanish (*sic*) out, founded the VOC in 1602, took Jacatra and built their capital Batavia on just that place in 1619.⁴³ In the article "Malabar", Portuguese and Dutch colonies on this coast are mentioned.⁴⁴ The Zedler has an article, "Ost-indianische Compagnie in Holland" (East India Company in Holland), in which its history, its administration and the system of a joint stock company are explained.⁴⁵ In the article "Indianische Handlung" (trading with the East Indies), the VOC's dominance in the East Indies is stressed.⁴⁶ But if the sources and references used are checked for the articles about India, a different picture emerges from what one would expect after reading seventeenth-century German travel accounts written by former VOC-employees. In the "India" article authors like Pliny and Strabo are quoted as well as some Iberian historiographies, the French traveller Tavernier (in the German translation) and Melchisédech Thévenot's French compilation. The only Dutch reference is Philippus Baldaeus, but it is not explained which of his texts has been used and in what language. For the even larger article "Mogul"⁴⁷ (one part about the empire and a second about the ruler), the same pattern is clear. In this case more encyclopaedias are mentioned, mostly in German, and amongst them Erasmus Francisci's

1680–1780 (Basel: 2004) 195–213; Prodöhl I., "‘Aus denen besten Scribenten’. Johann Heinrich Zedlers Universal-Lexikon im Spannungsfeld zeitgenössischer Lexikonsproduktion", *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 29 (2005) 82–94.

⁴³ Zedler J.H., *Universallexicon*, vol. 14 (Halle 1739) 635–642, 639.

⁴⁴ Ibid., vol. 19 (Halle: 1739) 677.

⁴⁵ Ibid., vol. 25 (Halle: 1740) 2335–2337.

⁴⁶ Ibid., vol. 14 (Halle: 1739) 643–644, 644: 'Diese Holländische Ost-Indische Commertien-Monarchie ist auch schon so fest gewurtzelt, daß, weil sie auch die Macht solche zu maintainen, bey den Hand hat, niemand so leichtlich dieselbe erschüttern wird'.

⁴⁷ Ibid., vol. 21 (Halle 1739) 816–826, 826–835.

Lust- and Statsgarten,⁴⁸ and from Dutch only Abraham Rogerius's and Olfert Dapper's description about the Mughal Empire in the German translations. Travel accounts are also mentioned, for instance, Jean de Thévenots *Reisebeschreibung*, again Tavernier, the German nobleman Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo as well as Adam Olearius. The only Dutch travelogue mentioned is Nieuhof with his *Sinesische Reisebeschreibung*. Books written by the Jesuits were another important kind of reference.⁴⁹

Because the focus of Dutch trade was the coast, Zedler's articles about the coastal regions might be expected to yield more. For the article "Malabar", the author refers to the Dutch Philippus Baldaeus and the French traveller Gabriel Dellon, but in each case to the German translations of their studies.⁵⁰ For "Calicut",⁵¹ the author astonishingly quotes the already mentioned Mandelslo, Dellon (here the French original), Jean de Thévenot (in German); for Cananor he mentions the Jesuit *Historiarum indicarum* by Giovanni Maffei, Jean Baptist

⁴⁸ Amongst others referred to in Zedler: Heinzelmann, J.B., *Kurtzes und accurates Systema der neueren Geographie: nach einer neuen und curieusen Methode in sich fassende [...]* (Hannover, Förster: 1718), *Christian Weisens rückständige Politische Fragen* (Dresden, Mieth: 1712).

⁴⁹ Athanasius Kircher and du Jarrik were mentioned explicitly. In most of Zedler's articles the sources are indicated in an abbreviated way, but it is not always possible to identify the originals neatly: Olfert Dapper refers certainly to his book *Asia, of naukeurige beschryving van het rijk des Grooten Mogols, en een groot gedeelte van Indiën: [...] beneffens een volkome beschryving van geheel Persie, Georgie, Mengrelie en andere gebuur-gewesten [...] verciert doorgaens met verscheide afbeeldingen in kooper gesneden* (Amsterdam: 1672); Thévenot J. de, *Voyages de Mr. de Thévenot, contenant la Relation de l'Indostan, des nouveaux Mogols, et des autres peuples et pays des Indes* (Paris, Biestkins: 1684), and Tavernier J.-B., *Les Six voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, ... qu'il a fait en Turquie, en Perse et aux Indes, pendant l'espace de quarante ans [...]* *Première partie, où il n'est parlé que de la Turquie & de la Perse, seconde partie, où il est parlé des Indes & des Isles voisines* (Paris, G. Clouzier et C. Barbin: 1676); Nicuhof J., *Het gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen Keizer van China: waar in de gedenkwaerdigste geschiedenissen, die onder het reizen door de Sineesche landtschappen, Quantung, Kiangsi, Nanking, Xantung en Peking, en aan het Keizerlijke Hof te Peking, sedert den jare 1655 tot 1657 zijn voorgevallen, op het bondigste verhandelt worden [...]* (Amsterdam: 1691) In the case of Abraham Rogerius, however, we find 'Hist.Brahman', probably referring to his important book *De open-deure tot het verborgen heyndendom ofte waerachtigh vertoogh van het leven ende zeden; mitsgaders de religie, ende godsdienst der Bramines, op de cust Chormandel, ende de landen daar ontrent* (Leiden, François Hackes: 1651), which was translated into German in 1663.

⁵⁰ Zedler, *Universalexicon*, vol. 19, (Halle 1739) 677–678. Baldaeus Ph., *Naaukeurige beschryvinge van Malabar en Choromandel, der zelver aangrenzende ryken, en het machtige eyland Ceylon : nevens een omstandige en grondigh doorzochte ontdekking en wederlegginge van de afgoderye der Oost-Indische heydenen* (Amsterdam: 1672); this text was translated into German in the same year; Dellon G., *Relation d'un voyage des Indes orientales* (Paris, Barbin, 1685), translated into German in 1700.

⁵¹ Zedler, *Universalexicon*, vol. 5 (Halle 1733) 253–254.

Thévenot and finally Linschoten. But for Linschoten there is no hint which of his published texts is meant, and because Linschoten was so important there are many possibilities.⁵² The article about the ‘Ost-Indianische Compagnie in Holland’⁵³ quotes Grotius’s *Annales et historiae de rebus belgicis* (1657), Emanuel van Meteren’s *Historia Belgica*, William Temple’s *Remarques sur l’estat des Provinces unies des Pais-Bas* (1672) and other rather historic works.⁵⁴ The last article of interest is the one about ‘Batavia’.⁵⁵ Here a book with the title *Schauplatz des Niederlandes* is quoted, the travel account by Tavernier again, the account by the Jesuit G. Tachard about his travels to Siam and one (!) Dutch book: the *Japanische Gesandtschaft* written by Arnoldus Montanus. This book is a compilation from Jesuit letters, Iberian history and early Dutch writers like Linschoten.⁵⁶

If the Zedler was a valid test for the impact of the travel accounts on eighteenth-century German discourse about India, the results are meagre. Neither De Bry nor Hulsius were taken into account, and particularly any of the texts by German VOC-employees mentioned before. The last is even more astonishing, because there is a special article for Johann Sigmund Wurffbain in the *Zedler*, where not only his career in Asia but also his journal about it is mentioned.⁵⁷ Among the Dutch texts only Linschoten and the Olfert Dapper’s compilation are mentioned more than once. Instead, some geographical, historiographical texts and such concerning theory of state are quoted, but travelogues are still important as a reference point. Most of the quoted travel accounts are French: Jean Baptist Tavernier, Jean de Thévenot, Gabriel Dellon; from the German travel accounts only Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo and his editor, Adam Olearius, are mentioned, that means the particular travelogues which nowadays are considered to be rewritten and composed rather than close to firsthand experience!

⁵² Ibid., vol. 5 (Halle: 1733) 504. In the article only “Linschoten” is quoted, so it is not decided whether the article relates to the *Itinerario* or the *Reysgeschrift*.

⁵³ Ibid., vol. 25 (Halle: 1740) 2335–2337.

⁵⁴ Ibid., vol. 25 (Halle: 1740) 2335–2337.

⁵⁵ Ibid., vol. 3 (Halle: 1733) 672–673.

⁵⁶ Montanus A., *Gedenkwaerdige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maetschappy in’t Ver-eenigde Nederland, aen de Kaisaren van Japan. Getrokken uit de Geschriften en Reiseaentekeninge der zelve Gesanten* (Amsterdam, Jacob Meurs: 1669), translated into German in the same year. Cf. Lach – Kley, *Asia* III, 488–489.

⁵⁷ Zedler, *Universalexicon*, vol. 60 (Halle: 1749) 4–8.

Clorindo Donato argues that in the eighteenth century – referring mostly to Diderot's and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* – encyclopaedias 'became the new gold standard, against which all nations would measure their own cultural merit and clout'.⁵⁸ If this hypothesis is true, the neglect of texts produced within the context of the VOC affected the further history of knowledge. The 'forgetting' started already with Erasmus Francisci's *Sinesischem Lust- und Statsgarten* (1668), as a first and still rather superficial analysis has shown. For the Mughal court Francisci referred to Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo, the English Ambassador Thomas Roe, Johannes de Laet and several Jesuit letters⁵⁹ and books, and for Cambaya and Vijayanagara to the Italian adventurer Ludovico de Varthema.⁶⁰ Only in his discussion of Calicut, he also refers to the voyage of an admiral, 'Peter Wilhelm Verhusen', probably Pieter Willemszoon Verhoeff.⁶¹ It was one of the German writers of VOC travel accounts, Johann Verken, who wrote about his voyage with this admiral. And Verken – again – was the only German VOC-employee whose travel account was published by De Bry and Hulsius, and so included in more representative compilations.

Horst Walter Blanke analysed the travelogue compilation *Allgemeine Historien der Reisen* (21 volumes, 1747–1774). This was an important compilation in the eighteenth century; it paraphrased published texts instead of editing new ones. Its main focus was maritime voyages and it largely neglected the smaller nation's endeavours. Moreover, and perhaps crucial for the topic of this paper, it excluded the reports of the German VOC-employees. Blanke stresses the fact that even Schreyer and Wurffbain, who were still remembered and more often quoted than the others, were not included.⁶²

In later encyclopaedias references to seventeenth-century German travel accounts were rare or not mentioned at all (like in the *Damen Conversationslexicon*, 1834; *Conversations-Lexikon oder kurzgefaßtes Handwörterbuch*,

⁵⁸ Donato C., "La Encyclopedia Metodica. Transfer und Transformation of Knowledge about Spain and the New World in the Spanish Translation of the *Encyclopédie Methodique*", in Lüsebrink H.-J. (ed.), *Das Europa der Aufklärung und die koloniale Welt* (Göttingen: 2006) 74–112.

⁵⁹ Cf. Francisci, *Sinesische Lust- und Statsgarten* 1436–1440, 1442, 1437.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1471–1472, 1476.

⁶¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1481.

⁶² Cf. Blanke H.W., "Wissen – Wissenserwerb – Wissensakkumulation – Wissenstransfer in der Aufklärung. Das Beispiel der Allgemeinen Historie der Reisen und ihrer Vorläufer", in Lüsebrink, *Das Europa der Aufklärung* 138–156, 147.

1809), or they were based on academically revised information. Krünitz referred mostly to more regional studies or histories in his *Ökonomisch-technologischer Encyclopädie*. This kind of professionally revised knowledge had gained more credibility than reports written by eye-witnesses.⁶³

Conclusion

Altogether, it emerges that the production of knowledge about Asia underwent several changes. Over the course of time the editor's work became more and more important, because he adapted the travellers' memoirs to the audience's expectations. Thus a first transformation of knowledge took place. The incorporation of knowledge in travel accounts in memory media such as encyclopaedias then constituted an even larger transformation. During the eighteenth century both the Dutch input in general as well as the travel accounts of German VOC-employees in particular lost their impact on German discourse. These texts, of regional relevance only – published to satisfy regional curiosity – were not deemed acceptable as true knowledge in the encyclopaedias.

During the eighteenth century, modes of organisation of knowledge and conceptions of science changed altogether. The idea of progress in history was established and at the turn of the nineteenth century a further wave of scientification took place, which was crucial for the reception of knowledge about India. Not only did Orientalism become an academic discipline, the field of history also changed, because the protagonists of Historicism understood their work as modern and source-based history. As a consequence encyclopaedias preferred academic references to travelogues. Nevertheless, some French and English travelogues were quoted in the *Krünitz*. It remains an unsolved issue why the analysed German travel accounts were almost completely excluded from the encyclopaedias and other discourses about Asia, while many

⁶³ One of the few travelogues quoted in Krünitz's encyclopedia is Bernier's (*Travels in the Mogul Empire AD 1656–1668*), in the article "Indostan", vol 29 (Halle: 1783) 684. The process of replacing travel accounts by academically revised books is even more the case for later encyclopaedias; cf. Meyers *Großes Konversationslexikon* (6th edition 1905–1909).

French and English travelogues were still quoted. There are two theses which might to explain this phenomenon.

First, the materiality of the German travel accounts can provide us with an indication for their exclusion. In contrast to the impressive collections of travel accounts, richly illustrated and edited by De Bry in folio, the travel accounts by Germans who went with the VOC to Asia as soldiers or sailors were mostly in cheap prints and had a smaller format. In addition, these texts did not really provide new information for the discourse about Asia and were rarely written and published for the erudite reader, merely satisfying regional and non-academic curiosity for news from Asia. This format could be related to the lack of credibility on first impression: texts written and printed in this way did not give the impression of being erudite or containing academically trustworthy knowledge.

A second reason might be found in the social background of the authors of seventeenth-century German travel accounts. Stories of writers of a lower social status were often not accorded the same credibility as those of authors with an erudite or even noble background.⁶⁴ This argument is strengthened if the reception of the travel accounts by Jürgen Andersen and Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo is compared. Both texts were thoroughly revised and complemented with information culled from other sources by Adam Olearius and they also had the same folio format and high quality illustrations. Nevertheless, Jürgen Andersen travelled to Asia as a VOC-employee, while Johann von Mandelslo was a noble adventurer, maybe with a secret mission for his duke, Friedrich III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf. As a result Jürgen Andersen was more or less forgotten, whereas Mandelslo was considered to be an important expert on the Mughal Empire and Indian culture until the late eighteenth century and beyond.

During the seventeenth century, the VOC had a major impact on the German discourse about India and Asia. Most of the travelogues, based on VOC-employees' memories, covered the Indian coasts and present-day Indonesia. This knowledge about Asia was diverse and had many facets. The image these texts give about Early Modern Asia was not structured by the dichotomy European-Asian, but rather that of a multipolar network where European and Asian powers interacted.

⁶⁴ Cf. Shapin S., *A Social History of Truth. Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago – London: 1994), most of all: 65–85 and 243–291.

In the late eighteenth and even more clearly in the nineteenth century, this was no longer the case, as the analysis of articles in the *Kriinitz* has shown. In the new enlightened order of truth, there was no longer room for the mighty king of Cananore, but, according to newly orientalist narratives, only for the female bodyguard at the Mughal's court.

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- Landschaften daselbst; [...] Der Dritte Theil Das Stats-Wesen/Policy-Ordnungen/Hofstäte/Paläste/[...] Aus den fürnembsten/alten und neuen/Indianischen Geschich-Land und Reisebeschreibungen/mit Fleiß zusammengezogen/und auf annehmliche Unterredungs-Art eingerichtet* (Nürnberg, Endter: 1668).
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THE VOC AND SWEDISH NATURAL HISTORY.
THE TRANSMISSION OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE IN
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Christina Skott

In the later part of the eighteenth century Sweden held a place as one of the foremost nations in the European world of science. This was mainly due to the fame of Carl Linnaeus (1707–78, in 1762 ennobled von Linné), whose ground breaking new system for classifying the natural world created a uniform system of scientific nomenclature that would be adopted by scientists all over Europe by the end of the century. Linnaeus had first proposed his new method of classifying plants in the slim volume *Systema Naturae*, published in 1735, while he was working and studying in Holland. There, he could for the first time himself examine the flora of the Indies: living plants brought in and cultivated in Dutch gardens and greenhouses as well as exotic herbaria collected by employees of the VOC. After returning to his native Sweden in 1737 Linnaeus would not leave his native country again. But, throughout his lifetime, *Systema Naturae* would appear in numerous augmented editions, each one describing new East Indian plants and animals. The Linnean project of mapping the natural world was driven by a strong patriotic ethos, and Linnaeus would rely heavily on Swedish scientists and amateur collectors employed by the Swedish East India Company; but the links to the Dutch were never severed, and he maintained extensive contacts with leading Dutch scientists throughout his life. Linnaeus' Dutch connections meant that his own students would become associated with the VOC. In this process, Swedish contacts to Dutch colonial society were created and maintained.

By drawing on examples, this essay first wants to show how Swedish involvement with the VOC fed and informed Swedish natural history. Links between Sweden and Holland had a long history, and first hand knowledge of the East had been transmitted by Swedish employees of the VOC already in the seventeenth century. During Linnaeus's time, the acquisition of scientific knowledge was steered by the idea of botany as a tool in the promotion of political and economic prosperity for Sweden. Linnaeus's goal was to carve out a niche for Swedish

science in Europe, but also to devise a patriotic cameralist strategy in which the natural sciences would be closely intertwined with political economy. Botanic research could, Linnaeus thought, promote import substitution and self-reliance for Sweden.¹ By the power of large national and European networks of informants Linnaeus was able to publish a stream of scientific treatises and academic dissertations, so that by the 1750s he was established as one of Europe's leading scientists.² The prestige of Linnaeus meant that Swedish naturalists trained in the Linnean system became sought after by European colonial powers, as botanical experts employed in a colonial race, which was played out on the scientific arena. The second aim of this paper is therefore to point to the exchanges of scientific knowledge made possible by Sweden's position as a politically neutral but scientifically prestigious nation. In these scientific networks the Swedes came to acquire a unique role as intermediaries between the Dutch and the British, at a time when botany became an increasingly important tool of colonial expansion.

The seventeenth century

The close scientific contacts between Sweden and Holland had roots in the intimate economic and cultural links, which had developed between the two countries during the seventeenth century. Dutch merchants had settled in Sweden in great numbers, and Dutch influence would be crucial in areas outside trade and commerce, such as shipbuilding and the arts. From mid-century onwards many Swedes had taken employment with the VOC, and it has been estimated that as much as 4–8 percent of the crews on board the Dutch East India ships were of Swedish origin in the second half of the seventeenth century. Although this calculation has been criticized for being based on limited material, it is acknowledged that the number of Swedes travelling to the East on Dutch ships numbered in their thousands.³

¹ This has most strongly been argued by Lisbet Koerner, in Koerner L., *Linnaeus. Nature and nation* (Cambridge, Mass. – London: 1999) and eadem, "Purposes of Linnean travel: a preliminary research report", in Miller D.P. – Reill P.H. (eds.), *Visions of Empire. Voyages, botany and representations of nature* (Cambridge: 1996) 117–152.

² See *Linnés nätverk*, exhibition catalogue, Kungliga Biblioteket (Stockholm: 2007).

³ Steenstrup C., "Scandinavians in Asian waters in the 17th century. On the Sources for the History of the Participation of Scandinavians in early Dutch ventures into Asia", *Acta Orientalia* 43 (1982) 69–83.

Many settled in Batavia for long periods, and as late as the 1770s a Swedish initiative was made to compile statistics of Swedish nationals dying in Batavia each year.⁴

Many of the Swedes in VOC service had a deep interest in the sciences, and numerous men were employed as cartographers and surgeons.⁵ The best-known of these was Herman Grim, medic in Batavia in the 1670s, who after returning to Sweden published a book on East Indian medical plants, *Pharmacopoeia Indica* (1684), a work which is now largely forgotten.⁶ Grim brought back extensive collections of naturalia, which he donated to the Swedish Board of Medicine, *Collegium Medicum*. He also had a keen interest in geology, and worked for years in the ill-fated silver mines in Sumatra, from where he brought back silver and gold, which was later enriched in Sweden.⁷

Although Grim's literary output was modest, other Swedes published travel books describing East Indian adventures. Nils Matson Köping was employed by the VOC 1647–1656, during which time he visited most of the Dutch trading posts in Asia.⁸ In 1667 Köping published *Een kort bsekrifffning uppå trennee resor och perigrinationer, sampt konungarijket Japan*, (A short description of three travels and peregrinations as well as the Kingdom of Japan), a book which would be reprinted several times and remained the most popular and widely read travel account in Sweden until mid-eighteenth century.⁹ The book with its lively descriptions of wonderful animals and plants made a big impression on the young Carl Linnaeus, who later would rely on Köping's book in an unexpected context, namely in his classification of man. In the tenth edition of *Systema Naturae* (1758) Linnaeus proposed two new species of humans, *Homo troglodytes* ('night man') and *Homo caudatus* (tailed man), both said to reside only in the East Indies, mainly in the

⁴ P.J. Bladh to C.P. Thunberg, July 1777. *Thunberg Collection*, Uppsala University Library.

⁵ Arne T.J., "Svenska läkare och fältskärer i holländska Ostindiska kompaniets tjänst", *Lychnos* (1956) 132–145; Arne T.J., "Svenska kartografer på Java", *Allsvensk samling* 46, 6 (1959) 11–12.

⁶ See Jap T.B., *Über Indonesische Volksheilkunde an Hand der Pharmacopoeia Indica des Hermann Nikolaus Grim(m), 1684* (Frankfurt am Main: 1965).

⁷ Löwegren Y., *Naturaliekabinett i Sverige under 1700-talet. Ett bidrag till zoologiens historia*, *Lychnos-Bibliotek* 13 (Uppsala-Stockholm: 1952) 347.

⁸ Arne T.J., *Svenskarna och Österlandet* (Stockholm: 1952) 155–163.

⁹ Köping N.M., *Een kort beskrifffning uppå trennee resor och peregrinationer, sampt konungarijket Japan* (Wisingsborgh: 1667); Almqvist S., "Nils Matsson Köping och hans mecenat", *Lychnos* (1965) 335–346.

Moluccas and Malacca.¹⁰ Linnaeus's main reference here was Köping's travel account, where these strange beings had been described in some detail. Furthermore, Linnaeus wrote that the existence of half-humans had now been confirmed, in eyewitness reports from the Malay Peninsula by Swedes travelling with the Swedish East India Company. A closer examination of this evidence reveals that Linnaeus's new species of humans can be attributed to European (mis)perceptions of the ethnic duality of Southeast Asia, characterised by sharp physical differences between coastal peoples and the tribes of the interior. However, Linnaeus' rigid belief in information provided by a countryman, shows the far-reaching influence of Swedish involvement with the VOC in the seventeenth century.¹¹

Another popular travel journal was that of Olof Erickson Willman, who like Köping had crisscrossed the East Indies on board Dutch ships. Although brief, *En kort beskrivning på en resa till Ostindien och Japan*, ('A short description of a journey to the East Indies and Japan') focuses on social and political conditions created by Dutch presence in the East, written in a critical tone which would become the hallmark of later Linnean travellers in the East.¹²

Carl Linnaeus

The rise of Carl Linnaeus to the position as one of Europe's leading scientists was closely linked to Sweden's new economic prosperity and political stability, which followed the end of the Great Nordic War at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Swedish confidence also grew in the intellectual arena, particularly in the sciences. Swedes had long made peregrinations to Europe's universities, and in the seventeenth

¹⁰ Linné C. von, *Menniskans cousiner (Anthropomorpha)*, efterskrift och noter av Telemak Fredbärj, Valda avhandlingar av Carl von Linné utgivna av Svenska Linné-Sällskapet 21 (Uppsala: 1955).

¹¹ Granroth C., "Flora's Apostles in the East Indies. Natural history, Carl Linnaeus and Swedish travel to Asia in the 18th century", *Review of Culture* 21 (2007) 147–149.

¹² Willman O.E., *En kort beskrivning på en resa till Ostindien och Japan den en svensk man och skeppskapiten, Olof Eriksson Willman benämnd, gjort haver* (Stockholm:1992); Lind E. – Svensson T., "Early Indonesian studies in Sweden. The Linnean tradition and the emergence of ethnography before 1900", *Archipel* 33 (1987) 59–60. Another VOC employee was Anders Toreson, whose journal however was only published in modern times. See Sundberg O.G. (ed.), *Anders Toresons ostindiska resa 1674–1683* (Stockholm: 1948).

century Holland became the main destination for Swedish students.¹³ Holland was therefore a natural choice for the young naturalist Carl Linnaeus, who arrived in Amsterdam in 1733. He had first studied at the universities of Lund and Uppsala, and just returned from a long scientific journey to Swedish Lapland, something which was to shape his later ideas of travel as a special, scientific, form of knowledge.¹⁴ His own international travels, however, would be limited to the three years he would spend in Holland and a short visit to England before returning to Sweden for good.

In Holland, Linnaeus soon became acquainted with leading Dutch scientists, such as Herman Boerhaave. Linnaeus' introduction in the household of Johannes and Nicolas Burman, father and son, would have far-reaching consequences. Johannes Burman soon invited Linnaeus to assist him in his work on *Thesaurus Zeylanicus*, a flora of East Indian plants based on herbariums collected by VOC employees in Ceylon. It was during this time that Linnaeus published his *Systema Naturae* (1735), then a modest pamphlet, in which he proposed his new method of classifying plants.

It was in Holland that Linnaeus came in first-hand contact with living botanical specimens from the East Indies. One facilitator here was George Clifford, an Anglo-Dutch businessman who had become one of the directors of the VOC. Clifford was a keen amateur scientist, whose private zoo and gardens on his estate in Hartekamp near Haarlem were famous throughout Holland. When Linnaeus first visited Hartekamp in 1735, Clifford was so impressed by the young Swede's ability to determine unknown East Indian plants only by examining their flowers, that he employed Linnaeus as a curator for his gardens.

Apart from large gardens, Clifford had established several hothouses, one for each continent, where he cultivated tropical plants. Here Linnaeus oversaw the care of a banana plant, then known under its Malay name *pisang*, and managed to bring it to flower. This was the first time this had happened in Europe, and Linnaeus went on to describe the banana in his first botanical monograph *Musa Cliffortiana* [Fig. 1]. The

¹³ It has been estimated that eight hundred Swedes were educated at Dutch universities in the seventeenth century.

¹⁴ Sörlin S., "Scientific travel – the Linnean tradition", in *Science in Sweden. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences 1739–1989*, ed. Tore Frängsmyr, Science history publications (Canton, MA.: 1989) 96–123.



Fig. 1. A. van der Laan, *Banana plant*. Engraving from Carolus Linnaeus, *Musa Clifortiana* (Leiden: 1736). Helsinki, University Library.

choice of this plant shows the continued strength of Biblical references in botany, as the banana was generally thought to be the forbidden fruit of Paradise. Clifford also commissioned Linnaeus to compile the splendidly illustrated catalogue *Hortus Cliffortianus* which describes both living plants and Clifford's own large herbarium. In his later work, such as *Species Plantarum* (1753), Linnaeus would copy passages directly from *Hortus Cliffortianus*.¹⁵

Linnaeus left Holland in 1738. His Dutch friends in vain attempted to persuade him to make a career for himself in Holland, with an offer to undertake an expedition to the Cape and America, where he would have acquired plants for Dutch collections.¹⁶ Earlier Linnaeus had turned down another offer of a position as surgeon in Surinam, explaining that the heat of the tropics would be unbearable for a man who had grown up in a cold country. Although Linnaeus famously could bear neither heat nor cold, he had another reason to return to Sweden – his patiently waiting fiancée. Before setting off for Sweden, Linnaeus visited England where he forged links with leading British botanists.

On his return to Sweden, he was able to take up a chair in medicine at the University of Uppsala from where, until his death in 1778, he oversaw his increasingly global project of mapping the natural world. Nevertheless, once settled in Uppsala, Linnaeus' scientific thinking was to become deeply patriotic, grounded in mercantilist ideas of the day. This meant that scientific endeavour was to be steered by the concept of utility. Botany became a 'useful' science when plants were seen as potential economic resources, as Linnaeus believed that foreign plants could be cultivated or adapted to grow in Sweden, and so make the nation less dependent on imports. Sweden could also learn from foreign methods of agriculture and manufactures, and especially Chinese agriculture was eagerly studied.¹⁷

Scientific travel in its widest sense therefore became one of the foundations of Linnaeus' quest for knowledge of the natural world. He sent out his own students on expeditions which often ended in failure or death, but he also received vast collections from a variety of both

¹⁵ Blunt W., *Carl von Linné* (Stockholm: 2002) 115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁷ Liedman S.E., "Utilitarianism and the economy", in *Science in Sweden. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences*, ed. Tore Frängsmyr, *Bidrag till Kungliga Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens historia* 22 (1989) 23–44.

foreign and Swedish travelling scientists. A crucial role in the Linnean network of knowledge was played by the Swedish Academy of Sciences, of which Linnaeus was a founding member, an institution which for a long time also acted as a sponsor of scientific travel.

Linnaeus' fascination with the East Indies had been ignited in Holland. He wrote to one of his students in the 1740s: 'When I think of all the wonderful plants of the Indies it hurts to think that so little is known'.¹⁸ The reality was that publications on East Indian flora were few. Linnaeus did refer to older works such as Jacob de Bondt's natural history of the East Indies (1658),¹⁹ but it has been claimed that he made curiously little use of the work of Rumphius.²⁰ In Holland he had seen the splendid twelve volume *Hortus Malabaricus*, a flora of the Malabar Coast of India, compiled and published by Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakestein, a VOC employee. Back in Uppsala, however, Linnaeus did not have access to this work, as the only copy in Sweden had been destroyed in a fire.

Linnaeus' travelling students

With the founding of the Swedish East India Company in 1735, the Asian natural world at once became more accessible for Swedes, and throughout his life Linnaeus would rely heavily on his contacts with the Company.²¹ During the 1740s and 1750s he acted as the central figure in a Swedish web of collecting and reporting from the East Indies. He arranged for trained naturalists, preferably his own students, to be sent out as chaplains and surgeons on the Company's ships. These men

¹⁸ *Bref & Skrifvelser af och till Carl von Linné, utgifna och med upplysande noter försedda av Th. M. Fries*, Utgifna af Upsala Universitet och Svenska Linnésällskapet I:V (Stockholm: 1907–1943) 329.

¹⁹ Bondt J. de, "Historiae naturalis et medicae Indiae Orientalis", *Gulielmi Pisonis, medici Amstelædamensis, De Indiae utriusque re naturali et medica, libri quatuordecim: quorum contenta pagina sequens exhibit* (Amsterdam, Elzevier: 1658).

²⁰ Beekman E.M. (transl. and ed.), *The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet. Georgius Everhardus Rumphius* (New Haven-London: 1999), "Introduction".

²¹ He wrote to an associate: 'no one has collected plants with open eyes, less still done anything for Zoology. A few blind men have picked up around 15 plants there. I had never thought that the Swedish nation would have the honor of describing the rare plants of the Indies'. Histories of the Swedish East India Company are Frängsmyr T., *Ostindiska kompaniet. Människorna, äventyret och den ekonomiska drömmen* (Höganäs: 1976) and Kjellberg S.T., *Svenska ostindiska kompanierna 1731–1818. Kryddor, te, porslin, siden* (Malmö: 1974).

were instructed to collect and report not only on botany and zoology, but to ‘ask about everything’.²² ‘Everything’ was to be brought back to Sweden, and a stream of East Indian plants arrived every year in Uppsala. Also Sweden’s growing private cabinets of natural history benefited from the East India trade, and annually the Academy of Sciences was presented with new plants and preserved zoological specimens, as well as Chinese machinery, medicines, paintings and ethnographical objects.²³ The Swedish Company traded mainly at Canton, which meant that Swedish knowledge of Asia came to be strongly focused on China, but individual expeditions went to other ports. In 1752, for example, a Swedish East India ship sailed from India across the Bay of Bengal. The ship carried one of Linnaeus’ students, Olof Torén, who would bring back new plants from Kedah, the one port on the Malay coast which was out of reach of the VOC. Another observer on board this ship was C.H. Braad, who had initially been sent out to India as a commercial spy disguised as a scientist, and later was able to provide Linnaeus with eye-witness reports of the ‘new’ species of humans of Malacca (See above).²⁴

To Swedish naturalists, Java seemed a botanical treasure chest waiting to be opened. Although Swedish East India ships sailed through the Straits of Sunda, where they anchored for fresh water and supplies [Fig.2], they were not permitted to go into Javanese ports. Per Osbeck, one of Linnaeus’ favourite students, described his agony in having to observe the coast of Java ‘like a hungry person only allowed to gaze at food from a distance’.²⁵ Notwithstanding, several of the scientists on board the Swedish ships made landings on the coast of Java in order to collect plants, the most important being Osbeck, who on

²² This is illustrated by the checklist given out to Christopher Tärnström, the first student who was sent out on an East India ship in 1745, see translation in Granroth, “Flora’s Apostles” 137.

²³ Lindroth S., *Kungliga Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens historia 1739–1818*. Vol. 1,2 *Tiden intill Wargentins död (1783)* (Stockholm: 1967). The Swedes had initially traded on Surat, but soon abandoned India due to English opposition. For an overview of Swedish naturalists in China, see Nyberg K., *Bilder av Mittens rike. Kontinuitet och förändring i svenska resenärers kinaschildringar, 1749–1912*, Avhandlingar från historiska institutionen i Göteborg 28 (Göteborg: 2001).

²⁴ Torén O., *En Ostindisk Resa*, introd. Stellan Ahlström (Stockholm: 1961); Braad’s long report on East Indian trade was given both to the Company and the Academy of Science.

²⁵ Osbeck P., *Dagbok öfver en ostindisk resa åren 1750, 1751, 1752* (facsimile), Suecica rediviva 5 (Stockholm: 1969).

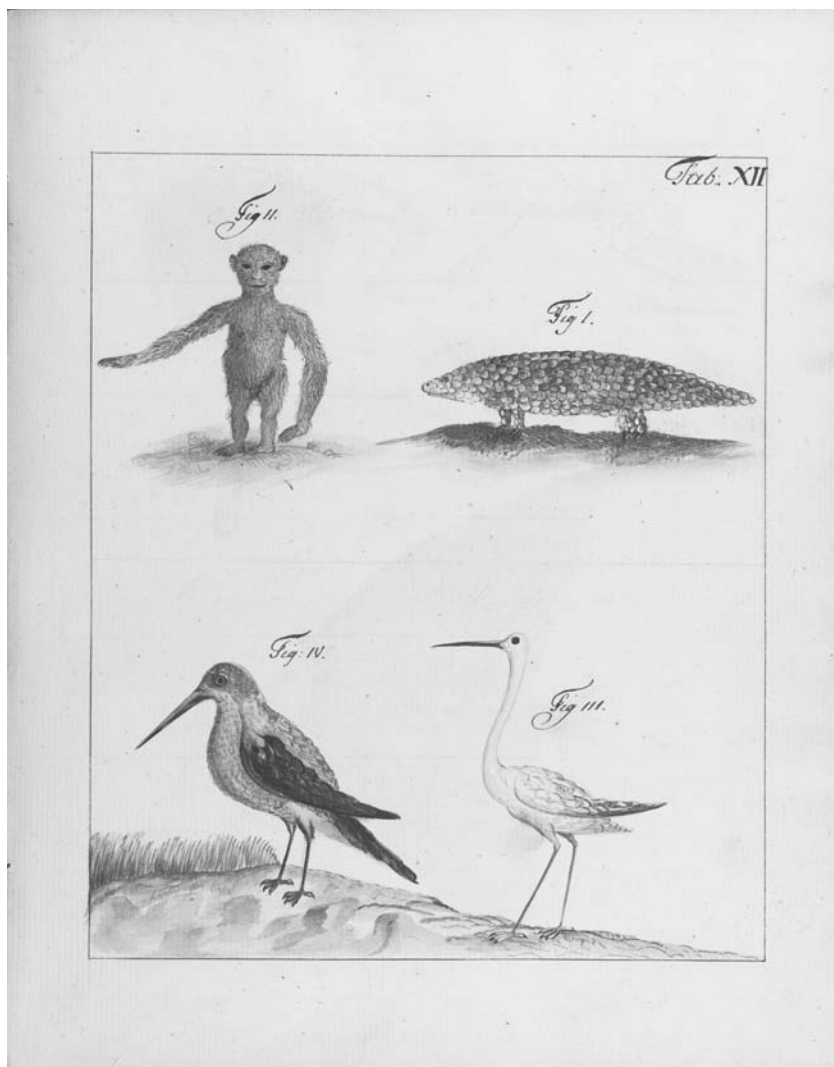


Fig. 2. Carl Johan Gethe, *Javanese animals* drawing in Carl Johan Gethe, *Dagbok hållen på resan till Ostindien 1746-1749*. Stockholm, Royal Library (Photo: Jessica Lund).

his homeward journey managed to collect numerous Javanese plants which Linnaeus published in his *Species Plantarum* of 1752.²⁶

In all, Linnaeus sent out more than twenty ‘apostles’ to different corners of the world, but few came in direct contact with the Dutch trading companies, and no Linnean student was employed by the VOC until the 1770s.²⁷ In the Cape, however, the Swedes came in direct contact with Dutch colonial science, as Swedish ships usually took on provisions and stayed for a few weeks at the Cape en route to Canton. This provided an excellent opportunity to botanise, and the Swedish contribution to Cape botany has long been acknowledged. Equally important were personal contacts created at the Cape.²⁸ One frequent visitor was Captain Carl Gustaf Ekeberg, an avid amateur scientist who made substantial contributions to the cartography and hydrography of the Indian Ocean.²⁹ Around 1770 Ekeberg managed to acquire a permit from the Dutch authorities to send a Swedish botanist to stay permanently at the Cape. This opportunity delighted Linnaeus, who arranged passage for his student Anders Sparrman on board a Swedish East India ship. Arriving in 1772, Sparrman took employment as a private tutor to a Dutch family.³⁰ Before long, however, Sparrman received an offer he could not refuse. The Englishman James Cook had arrived at the Cape and invited Sparrman, as an associate of the famed Linnaeus, to accompany him on his second expedition to the Pacific. This journey would bring Sparrman fame: the first part of his

²⁶ Fox Maule A., – Hansen C., “Linnés korrespondance med Pehr Osbeck 1750–1753”, *Svenska Linnésällskapets årsbok* (1972–1974) 75–145; Nyberg K. – Manktelow M., “Linnés apostlar och tillkomsten av *Species plantarum*”, *Svenska Linnésällskapets årsskrift* (2002–2003) 9–30.

²⁷ Daniel Rolander was a student of Linnaeus who travelled to South America on the invitation of a Swedish merchant in Surinam. Rolander did not stay long in Surinam, complaining that the Dutch there had no knowledge of the sciences. For an overview of Linnaeus’ travelling students, see Sörlin S. – Fagerstedt O., *Linné och hans apostlar* (Örebro: 2004).

²⁸ The lively social life at the Cape is described in a popular Swedish travelogue by the chaplain Jacob Wallenberg, see Wallenberg J., *My son on the Galley*, edited and translated by Peter Graves (Norwich: 1994).

²⁹ Ekeberg C.G., *Capitaine Carl Gustaf Ekebergs Ostindiska resa, åren 1770, och 1771. Beskrefven uti bref til Kongl. Svenska vet. Academiens secreterare* (facsimile, first publ. 1773), Suecica rediviva 14 (Stockholm: 1970); Forsstrand C., “Carl Gustaf Ekeberg, hans färder till Ostindien och Kina. Naturvetenskapliga intressen och förbindelser med Linné”, *Svenska Linnésällskapets årsbok* 11 (1928) 147–161. Ekeberg published sea charts of the Sunda straits in the Proceedings of the Swedish Academy of Sciences, where he also deposited a chart of the southern coast of Java.

³⁰ Rookmaaker L.C., *The zoological exploration of Southern Africa 1650–1790* (Rotterdam: 1989) 135–137.

travel account *Resa till Goda-Hopps-Udden, södra Pol-kretsen och omkring jordklotet, samt till Hottentott- och Caffër-Landen* (1783) would quickly be translated into English and Sparrman was himself drawn into British scientific networks.³¹

Carl Peter Thunberg

In the 1770s, one Swedish scientist in particular would become directly involved with the VOC. Carl Peter Thunberg was another favourite student of Linnaeus, whose long travels to the Cape, Java, Japan and Ceylon in the service of the VOC brought him fame throughout Europe. After returning to Sweden, Thunberg took up Linnaeus' chair in botany at the University of Uppsala. Throughout his long life (he died in 1828), Thunberg maintained contacts with both the Dutch and British scientific establishments, and came to play a crucial role in the transmission of scientific knowledge well into the nineteenth century. [Fig. 3].

Thunberg had first studied under Linnaeus in Uppsala.³² Equipped with recommendations from his teacher, Thunberg travelled to Holland in 1770. There he was introduced to the two Burmans who had been Linnaeus' associates 35 years earlier. It was Nicolas Burman who suggested that Thunberg should attempt to make his way to Japan, as yet scarcely known in Europe. It was arranged for him to take employment as a surgeon on board a VOC ship sailing to the Cape. Thunberg had by now become acquainted with collectors and professional botanists in Holland, where philanthropic Dutch merchants offered financial incentives for him to deliver plants to the *Hortus Medicus* in Amsterdam.³³ This marked a departure from the Linnean ideal, which insisted that scientific travel was to benefit Sweden exclusively. The

³¹ Sparrman A., *A voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, towards the Antarctic Polar circle, and round the world* [...], 2 vols. (Dublin, White, Cash, and Byrne: 1785).

³² For biographical information, see Nordenstam B. (ed.), *Carl Peter Thunberg. Linnean, resenär, naturforskare, 1743–1828*, Bidrag till Kungliga Svenska vetenskapsakademiens historia 25 (Stockholm: 1993); Wallin L. (ed.), *Carl Peter Thunberg (1743–1828). Själbiografiska anteckningar med bibliografi*, Scripta Minora Bibliothecae Regiae Universitatis Upsaliensis 6 (Uppsala: 1993).

³³ Screech T. (annotation and introduction), *Japan extolled and decried. Carl Peter Thunberg and the Shogun's realm, 1775–1796* (London-New York: 2005) 5.

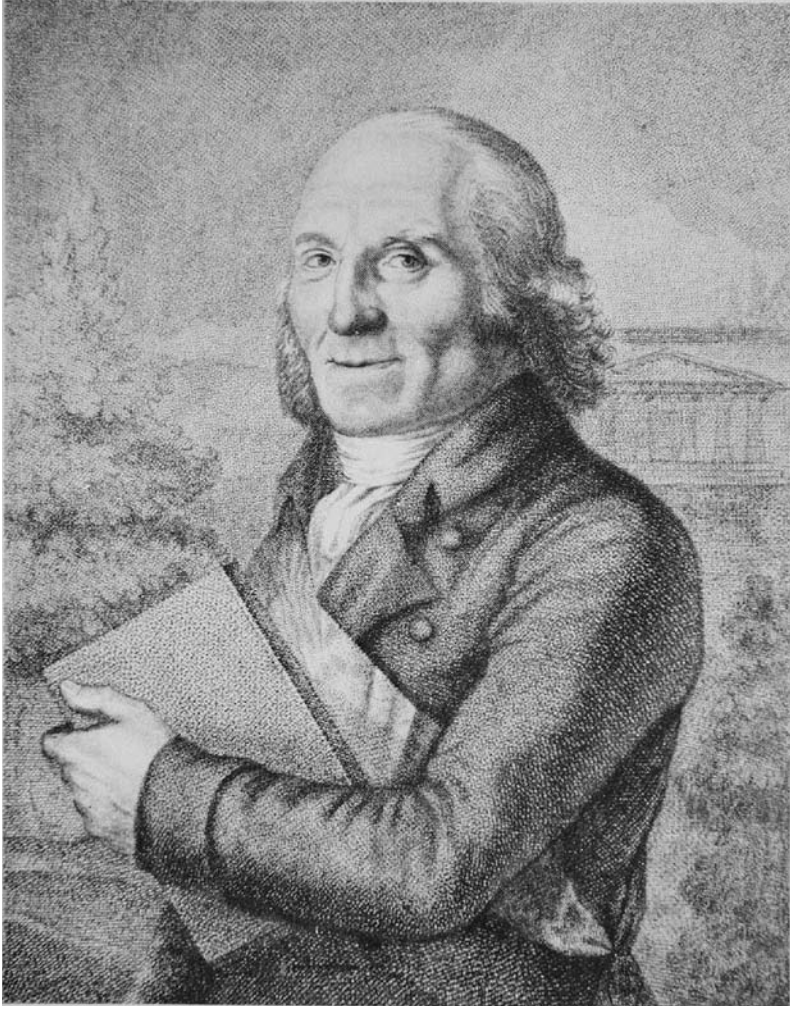


Fig. 3. Anonymous, *Portrait of Carl Peter Thunberg*, lithograph from *Magasin för Konst, Nyheter och Moden* 5 (1928).

allegiance to Linnaeus was therefore broken, but by then the master was old and in ill health, and would not survive Thunberg's return.

By associating himself with the VOC, Thunberg could travel further and get access to regions where no other Linnean had been. As noted earlier, it was not unusual for Swedes to be employed by the VOC, and the ship carrying Thunberg to the Cape had twenty-one Swedes on board, including the ship's captain. Thunberg remained at the Cape from 1772 to 1775. He made several expeditions to the interior of the Cape Colony, but he also forged connections with other visiting botanists, such as the Scotsman Francis Masson.³⁴ Throughout this period, Thunberg received financial support from private collectors in Sweden, as one of them wrote 'you are not paid in the Dutch service as you ought to be'.³⁵ In Sweden, it was still assumed that Thunberg's travels were undertaken primarily to promote Swedish science; he was expected to send everything he collected home to Sweden in a patriotic Linnean spirit.³⁶

Thunberg's ultimate goal was to reach Japan. Only two Dutch ships – with Dutch crews – were allowed to trade in Japan every year. At the Cape, Thunberg had become fluent in the Dutch language, and he could now disguise himself as a Dutchman. He first sailed to Batavia where he applied for the post of resident physician in Dejima, which meant that he could stay in Japan one whole year. At first Thunberg found it frustrating not to be able to move around freely, as Dutch movement outside the man-made island of Dejima was restricted by the Japanese. He did, however, manage to collect plants and research *materia medica*, later resulting in his *Flora Japonica* (1784). He also accompanied a Dutch embassy to the Court in Edo. Thunberg's account of his visit in Edo would make up a large portion of his four volume *Resa uti Europa, Africa, Asia, förrättad åren 1770–1779*, which because of the scarceness of information on Japan soon was translated into French, German and English [Fig.4].³⁷ Written in the lively and

³⁴ O'Brian P., *Joseph Banks. A life* (London: 1987) 228. See also Thunberg C.P., *Travels at the Cape of Good Hope 1772–1775: based on the English edition 1793–1795*, ed. V.S. Forbes (Cape Town: 1986).

³⁵ Screech, *Japan extolled*.

³⁶ Rookmaaker, *The zoological exploration* 148–162; Gunn, M. – Codd, L.E., *Botanical exploration of Southern Africa* (Cape Town: 1981).

³⁷ Thunberg C.P., *Resa uti Europa, Africa, Asia, förrättad åren 1770–1779*, 4 vols. (Uppsala, Joh. Edman: 1788–1793); Thunberg C.P., *Travels in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Performed between the years 1770 and 1779...*, 4 vols (London, W. Richardson: 1793–1795).

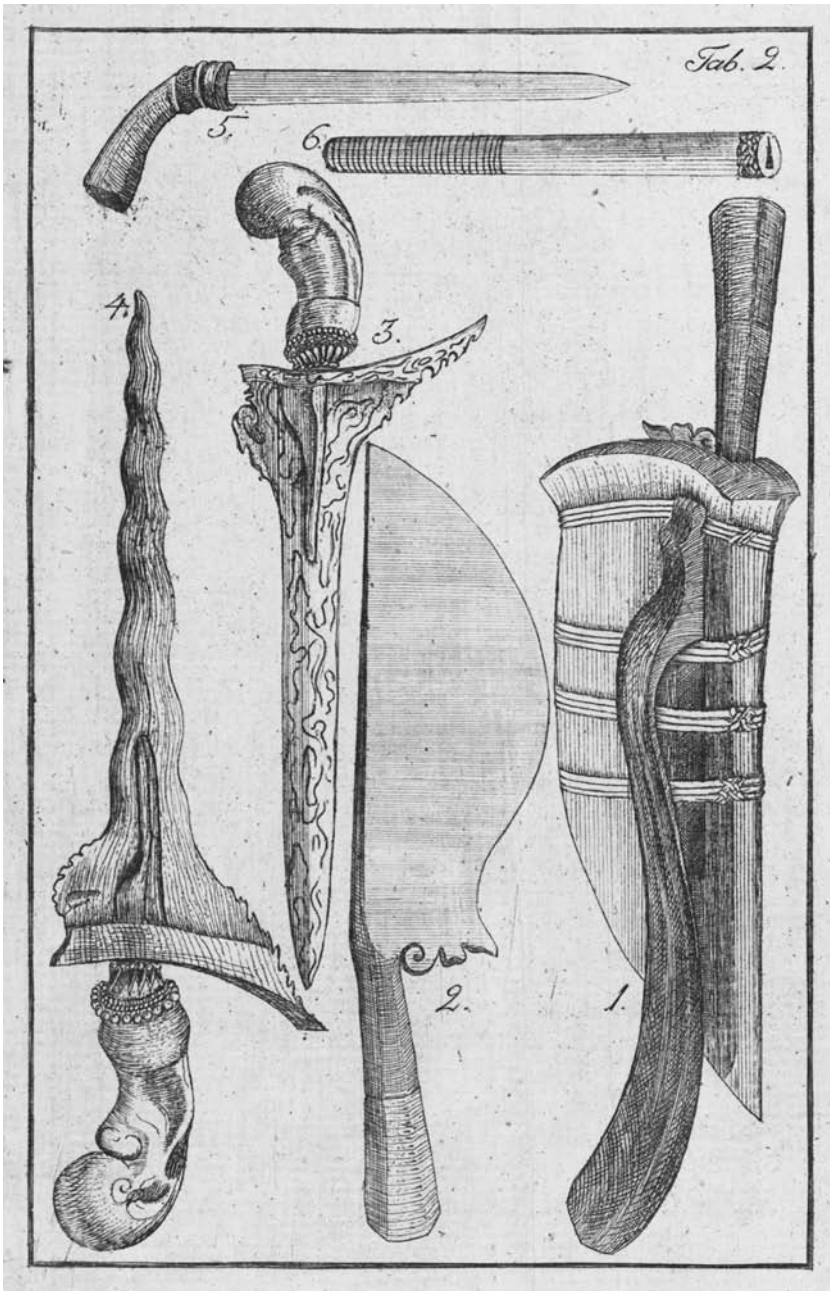


Fig. 4. *Javanese weapons*, engraving from C.P. Thunberg, *Travels in Europe, Africa, and Asia*. Performed between the years 1770 and 1779 (London, W. Richardson: 1795). Cambridge, Cambridge University Library (Published by the permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library).

observant style which was the hallmark of Linnean travel writing, this work would remain one of the main European sources of information on Japan for many years.

While still in Dutch service, Thunberg had been appointed *botanices demonstrator* at the University in Uppsala. It is not known whether he had indeed intended to pursue a career outside Sweden, but his fellow Linnean and friend Peter Jonas Bergius urged him to return: 'for God's sake, don't think of any further journeys, but rather think of your native country. It is essential that you come home and take up the office of Demonstrator at Uppsala, as Arch.³⁸ Linné is on the brink of the grave and mentally and physiologically dead'.³⁹ Despite the prospect of succeeding the great Linnaeus in Uppsala, Thunberg did not rush home. He first visited England where he met Joseph Banks and his circle of scientists. There he found, among others, his countrymen Jonas Dryander and Daniel Solander, both fellow former students of Linnaeus.

Thunberg's later publications on the flora of Japan and the Cape earned him epithets such as 'Japan's Linnaeus' and 'the father of Cape botany', but his interests went far beyond botany and zoology.⁴⁰ His inaugural address to the Swedish Academy of Science was on Japanese coins and modes of payment.⁴¹ As professor in Uppsala Thunberg was the *praeses* of 294 dissertations, many on Japanese and Javanese subjects.⁴² He wrote, for example, an academic dissertation on the fabled Southeast Asian poison tree, *Arbor Toxicaria Macassariensis*.⁴³ During his relatively short stay in Java, Thunberg also learnt Malay and brought back to Sweden a collection of Dutch and Portuguese publications on the Malay language. In his travel journal he published a Malay word list which, through its English translation, became a standard work of reference by British colonial officials for decades.⁴⁴ In all, Thunberg's

³⁸ In Sweden Linnaeus was later in life commonly referred to as 'Archiatér'.

³⁹ Quoted in Rookmaaker, *The Zoological exploration* 149.

⁴⁰ Landin B.O., "Thunberg som zoolog", in Thunberg C.P., *Linnean, resenär, naturforskare 1743–1828*, ed B. Nordenstam (Stockholm: 1993).

⁴¹ Thunberg C.P., *Intrådes-tal om de mynt-sorter, som i äldre och sednare tider blifvit slagne och varit gångbare uti kejsaredömet Japan* (Stockholm, J.G. Lange: 1779).

⁴² Rookmaaker L.C. – Svanberg I., "Bibliography of Carl Peter Thunberg (1743–1828)", *Svenska Linnésällskapets årsskrift* (1992–1993) 7–71.

⁴³ Resp. Christen Aejmelaeus, 1788.

⁴⁴ Thunberg, *Travels*, vol. II, 228–256. See also *Förteckning på de böcker som till Kungliga Academiens Bibliothek i Uppsala förväras av Carl Peter Thunberg, 1782*. "Ur Bibliotekets arkiv", Uppsala University Library.

publications covered a wide range of subjects, which together made a substantial contribution to European knowledge of the Dutch East Indies.

In comparison to his stay in Japan, Thunberg's two visits to Java en-route for Japan have attracted little attention. Overall, lack of official interest in the natural sciences had long been a characteristic of Dutch presence in the East Indies.⁴⁵ It was little wonder then that Thunberg, a student of the great Linnaeus, was welcomed to Batavia with open arms by the small circle of amateur scientists active in Batavia at this time, sometimes referred to as the 'Indies Enlightenment'.⁴⁶ This group centered around Jacobus Cornelius Mattheus Radermacher, who first had travelled to the East as a merchant at the age of sixteen. After law studies in Holland, Radermacher returned to Batavia to become a keen promoter of science and learning in the Dutch East Indies. In Batavia, Radermacher showed Thunberg great hospitality, and offered to provide financial support for his journey to Japan.⁴⁷ He also arranged for Thunberg to undertake excursions in Java, accompanied by a 'well behaved sensible Javanese', later described by Thunberg as an invaluable source on 'the Malay names of trees and herbs, and the medicinal virtues and uses'.⁴⁸ After his return to Sweden, Thunberg continued his correspondence with the men in Batavia, especially Radermacher and Baron Friedrich von Wurmb, another keen scientist and author of scientific publications. There was also an exchange of books between Batavia and Uppsala, and Thunberg was asked to provide the gentlemen in Batavia with new Swedish publications, such as the new additions to Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae*.⁴⁹

Radermacher had long worked for the establishment of a learned society in Batavia. His first initiative, in 1770, was turned down because of resistance from the Governor-General, and it was not before 1778 that official support could be obtained for the founding of *Bataviaasch*

⁴⁵ See, for example, Boxer C.R., *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, first publ. 1965 (London: 1990) 173.

⁴⁶ Thunberg, *Travels*, vol. IV, 217.

⁴⁷ Thunberg wrote of Radermacher that their friendship 'gave me an opportunity of observing, with pleasure and satisfaction, his elevated mind, and his great zeal for the arts and sciences, which he not only cherished and admired in others, but also himself cultivated and possessed, in a country where otherwise Mammon is the sole idol and object of worship'. Thunberg, *Travels*, vol. II, 219.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol 2, 220.

⁴⁹ See Radermacher to Thunberg 16.9 1781. *Thunberg Collection*, Uppsala University Library.

Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, the first society of its kind in Asia.⁵⁰ From the start Radermacher nourished ambitious plans for the society. The new Governor-General sent instructions to VOC employees around the East Indies to collect naturalia, and systematic meteorological observations were carried out in Batavia and other postings. It soon became clear that the society's growing collections needed a curator, a trained scientist. Radermacher again turned to Sweden, writing to Thunberg in 1781 asking him to send out a young promising scientist to work for the society.

Clas Fredrik Hornstedt

Thunberg, like Linnaeus earlier, did not have to look far. Clas Fredrik Hornstedt was one of his own most promising students, a man who met all the Linnean requirements for a scientific traveller: he was a skilled draftsman and had received a thorough training in the Linnean nomenclature and method. Furthermore, he had already made a scientific journey to Lapland in Linnaeus' footsteps. This was important, as Linnaeus' himself had stated (in his dissertation *Instructio perigrinatoris*) that it was essential for a scientist to have first travelled in his own country before embarking on foreign travels. By the time Thunberg replied to Radermacher, telling him that a suitable young man had been found, preparations for Hornstedt's departure to Java were already underway.⁵¹

These preparations clearly illustrate the duality which came to characterise Hornstedt's stay in Batavia: although recruited to work for the Dutch, he was given a special pass by the King of Sweden, asking for permission to carry out scientific work for the Swedish crown in the East Indies.⁵² The journey was sponsored by the King, the Academy

⁵⁰ The society seems to have been largely dependent on the support of the newly appointed governor-general Reinier de Klerk, stepfather of Radermacher's wife. On Radermacher and the 'Indies Enlightenment', see Taylor J.G., *The social world of Batavia. European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison, WI.: 1983) 85–87.

⁵¹ Hornstedt C.F., *Brev från Batavia. En resa till Ostindien 1782–1786*, ed. C. Granroth, assisted by P. Berg and M. Jonasson (Helsinki: 2008) 153.

⁵² *Kongliga Bref och Skrifvelser* I, 1742–1791, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Stockholm.

of Science in Stockholm and the University of Uppsala.⁵³ Several private Swedish collectors also contributed, in return for a promise to be sent plants and animals from Java. High hopes were now placed in Hornstedt, and in true Linnean spirit Hornstedt himself never failed to point out that the purpose of his journey was to promote Swedish scientific research.

Hornstedt was given free passage to Java on a Swedish East India ship. After the usual stop at the Cape, the ship *Sophia Magdalena* arrived in the Sunda straits in July 1782. At Anjer, Hornstedt left his countrymen and made his way towards Batavia, where he was welcomed by Radermacher and his circle. According to his journals and notebooks, Hornstedt worked on the Society's collections and oversaw its botanical gardens. [Fig. 5]. The proceedings of the *Bataviaasch Genootschap* announced that the collections and library had been opened to the public.⁵⁴ Hornstedt was promised money and permission by the Governor-General to undertake scientific expeditions throughout the Dutch East Indies. The results were disappointing, as Hornstedt like most other newcomers to Batavia suffered from ill health. But, throughout his stay, he kept journals and diaries, which in the Linnean fashion dwelt on a variety of subjects: ethnography, population statistics, descriptions of theatre performances, manufactures and industries. He was particularly interested in Batavia's Chinese population, as he wrote that Batavia is a place where Europeans can witness things which they are never allowed to see in China.⁵⁵ He also collected a large number of plants and animals, which he did not add to the Batavian Society's collections but sent home, to Sweden.

Hornstedt had initially planned to stay in the East Indies for several years, but soon began to fear that he would not survive in unhealthy Batavia. After just one year Hornstedt returned to Europe on board the Swedish ship *Concordia*,⁵⁶ accompanied by a menagerie of live Javanese animals, among them an orang-utan, all of which sadly would die at sea. After a year of travel in Europe, Hornstedt arrived back in

⁵³ See Minutes 7.8 1782, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Stockholm.

⁵⁴ *Verhandelungen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap der Kunsten en Weetenschappen*, vol. II (Amsterdam – Rotterdam: 1784) 5–7.

⁵⁵ Hornstedt, *Brev från Batavia* 191–192. See also Kumar A., "A Swedish view of Batavia in 1783–4. Hornstedt's letters", *Archipel* 37 (1989) 247–262.

⁵⁶ This was the first privately owned Swedish ship to sail to Asia, and therefore allowed to trade at Batavia.



Fig. 5. C.F. Hornstedt, *C.F. Hornstedt with Javanese man*. Drawing in C.F. Hornstedt, *Hornstediana*. Helsinki, Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Sweden in 1786. Shortly before returning he had received a doctorate from the University of Greifswald for a dissertation on the edible fruits of Java.⁵⁷ He brought with him extensive collections, most of which were presented to Thunberg in Uppsala and private collectors. The King himself was given shells, dried snakeskins, stuffed birds and ethnographical objects. In his notebook, Hornstedt recorded the contents of his collections: hundreds of Chinese and Ceylonese medicinal plants and seeds together with information on their indigenous uses, extensive collections of minerals from all over the East Indies, Chinese utensils and cosmetics, clothes from Otahiti, a variety of Japanese papers, Chinese dolls, Chinese and Japanese clothing and weaponry, Javanese weapons and ornaments, maps and manuscripts in various Asian languages and much more.⁵⁸

How had it been possible for Hornstedt to acquire such large collections during his relatively short stay in Batavia? He had written to Thunberg that while organizing the Batavian Society's extensive collections, he often found many specimens of the same species. It therefore seems likely that he simply helped himself to the fast growing collections of the *Bataviaasch Genootschap*.

After his return to Stockholm, Hornstedt's vast collections attracted considerable attention. The King himself came to see his displayed collections, where highlights included the (by then preserved) orangutan and the stuffed foetus of a rhinoceros. He was offered the position of curator for the collections of the Academy of Science and was soon elected a member of the Academy, where he gave an inaugural address on the inhabitants of Java. He also edited and rewrote his Javanese journal, with the intention to publish it as a travel account from the East Indies. But, although Hornstedt contributed to a number of zoological publications, his planned book on Java never materialized.

It has been said that Hornstedt in many ways remained the 'last Linnean', representing an approach to the natural sciences which after the death of Linnaeus was becoming unfashionable.⁵⁹ The sciences in

⁵⁷ Hornstedt C.F., *Fructus Javæ esculenti eorumque usus com diæticus tum medicus*, Diss. Diaet., Med. Praes. C.E. Weigel, pro gradu doctoris, 7 sept. 1786 (Greifswald, A.F. Rôse: 1786).

⁵⁸ Hornstedt C.F., *Dagbok på Java, Westinska handskriftssamlingen*, Uppsala University Library; Granroth, "En resa till Ostindien", in Hornstedt, *Brev från Batavia* 62f, 68f.

⁵⁹ Sörlin S., "Scientific travel – the Linnean tradition", in Frängsmyr T. (ed.), *Science in Sweden. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences 1739–1989*, Science history publications

Sweden saw a marked decline in the final years of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ This was acknowledged by European visitors to Sweden, who dryly commented that it had become sufficient to travel to Java and send in a few birds, to be elected member of the Swedish Academy of Science.⁶¹ During these years, science in Sweden not only lost its material and economic function, it also lost its audience.⁶² Endless scientific detail, descriptions of individual species, the ambition to record and list 'everything', which had characterised Linnean travelogues, no longer attracted readers.⁶³ With the arrival of the new century, botany in Sweden was moving towards the new science of plant geography.⁶⁴

For Hornstedt, an academic career was no longer a lucrative option, and he opted to serve as an army surgeon. In addition, Hornstedt clearly had intentions to publish a larger zoological work: his extensive manuscript *Descriptiones animalium* contains skillfully executed descriptions and drawings of mainly Javanese animals⁶⁵ [Fig. 6]. However, this manuscript has until recently remained unpublished, and a systematic zoological account of Java would have to wait until the British occupied the island in 1812. It was no accident that Thomas Horsfield's *Zoological researches in Java, and the neighbouring islands* (8 volumes, 1821–1824) appeared in the wake of the short British occupation.⁶⁶

(Canton, MA.: 1989) 105; Sörlin S., "Apostlarnas gärning. Vetenskap och offervilja i Linné-tidevarvet", *Svenska Linnésällskapets årsskrift* (1990–1991) 75–89; Lindroth S., *Kungliga Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens historia 1739–1818*. Vol. I,2 *Tiden intill Wargentins död* (1783) (Stockholm: 1967) 648.

⁶⁰ Lindroth, *Kungliga Svenska* 404.

⁶¹ Acerbi G., *Travels through Sweden, Finland and Lapland, to the North Cape, in the years 1798–1799* (London, Joseph Mawman: 1802) 112–113.

⁶² Johannisson K., "Naturvetenskap på reträtt. En diskussion om naturvetenskapens status under svenskt 1700-tal", *Lychnos* (1979–1980) 109–154.

⁶³ See Jonsell, "Thunberg, Linné och det linneanska" 52.

⁶⁴ See Eliasson P., *Platsens Blick. Vetenskapsakademien och den naturlihistoriska resan 1790–1840*, *Idéhistoriska skrifter* 29 (Umeå: 1998), chapter 5.

⁶⁵ Rookmaaker L.C., "The *Descriptiones animalium* prepared by C.F. Hornstedt on a journey to the East Indies", *Archives of Natural History* 15, 3 (1988) 289–309. See also Steenis C.G.G.J. (ed.), *Flora Malesiana. Being an illustrated systematic account of the Malaysian flora*, series I, vol. I (Djakarta: 1950).

⁶⁶ Horsfield T., *Zoological Researches in Java, and the Neighbouring Islands* (Singapore: 1990).

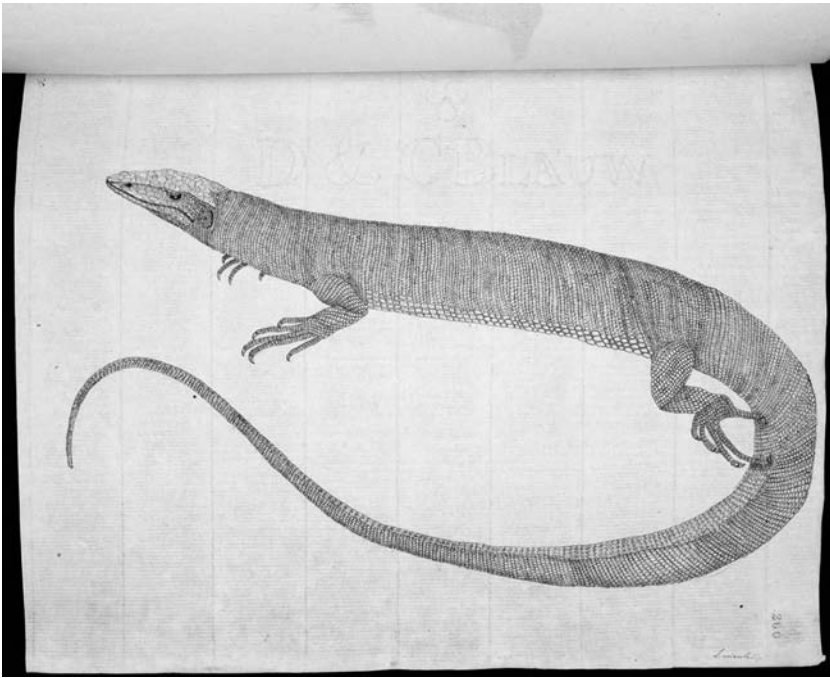


Fig. 6. C.F. Hornstedt, *Lacerta orientalis*. Drawing in C.F. Hornstedt, *Hornstedtiana*. Helsinki, Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Sweden between Holland and Britain

The energetic study of the natural history of Java initiated by the British mirrored a more assertive pursuit of scientific knowledge which characterized British expansion at this time. The role of the natural sciences and botany in particular as a tool in European colonial expansion has in recent years attracted considerable scholarly attention.⁶⁷ In Britain, the rise of botany as an imperial science has been studied through the life and work of Joseph Banks, whose scientific pre-eminence

⁶⁷ See, for example, Drayton R., *Nature's government. Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven – London: 2000); Miller D.P. – Reill P.H. (eds.), *Visions of Empire. Voyages, botany and representations of nature* (Cambridge: 1996); Schiebinger L. – Swan, C., *Colonial botany: Science, commerce, and politics in the Early Modern world* (Philadelphia, PA.: 2005) Fara P., *Sex, botany & Empire: The story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks* (Duxford: 2003).

was launched when he was taken on board the *Endeavour* as a scientist under James Cook. During his long life, Banks also sent out numerous collectors with instructions imbued with a strong utilitarian philosophy.⁶⁸ In this sense, British botanical research, with Banks as the central figure and Kew gardens as a 'control center', much resembled the system of reporting and collecting which Linnaeus had created in Uppsala fifty years earlier. However, this activity now took place on a much bigger scale and was propelled by new goals of imperial expansion, as both plants and botanical knowledge were transmitted and disseminated to other corners of the British Empire.

Several Swedes emanating from within the Linnean circle were central to the rise of botany in Britain. Daniel Solander, a student of Linnaeus who initially had been sent to Britain to introduce the new nomenclature, also travelled with James Cook to the Pacific. He became a close associate of Banks and did not return to Sweden.⁶⁹ On his first expedition, Cook brought with him another student of Linnaeus, Herman Spöring, who eventually died in Batavia during the homeward journey. Another Linnean drawn tightly into the Banksian circle was Jonas Dryander.

Much earlier, after meeting British botanists in London in 1735, Linnaeus had written: 'The English are indeed the most generous people on earth'.⁷⁰ Towards the end of the century, however, the climate of free scientific exchange had changed. This shift, a symptom of the hardening rivalry between European colonial powers at this time, is illustrated in the correspondence between Banks and his large network of collectors and informants. One of Banks' correspondents was Thunberg in Uppsala.⁷¹ The letter exchange between Banks and Thunberg is not extensive, but points to the value of the Swedes as intermediaries in the transmission of knowledge. It was, for example, Thunberg who

⁶⁸ Mackay D., "Agents of Empire: the Banksian collectors and evaluation of new lands", in Miller – Reill, *Visions of Empire* 38–57.

⁶⁹ Solander later fell out with Linnaeus after failing to honour his promise to return to Sweden to marry one of Linnaeus' daughters.

⁷⁰ Blunt, *Carl von Linné* 112.

⁷¹ Thunberg described with fascination Banks' residence in Soho Square as 'an academy of natural history'. Carter H.B., *Sir Joseph Banks 1743–1820* (London: 1987) 173.

sent the proceedings of the *Bataviaasch Genootschap* to Banks, who had them translated in London by his Swedish assistants.⁷²

It is clear, however, that Thunberg's principle interest to the British lay in his knowledge and access to Japan. Banks himself had a long-time interest in Japan, and had been able to secure material from Engelbert Kaempfer, which was deposited in the British Museum.⁷³ He had also sought to acquire the collections of Isaac Titsingh, a VOC employee who had spent long periods of time in Japan and had learnt Japanese.⁷⁴ When Thunberg had visited London in 1778–79 he had appeared before the Royal Society, where he had answered questions on Japan, and an excerpt from his travel journal was published in *Philosophical transactions* in 1780.⁷⁵

Later Banks approached Thunberg in attempts to solicit information on Japan, a country increasingly attracting British commercial attention towards the end of the eighteenth century. While Thunberg was working on his *Flora Japonica*, Banks wrote to Uppsala: 'do not think me unreasonable when I put you in mind of your promise of sending such other duplicates as you may be able to', adding 'remember I have no other method of obtaining such rare plants'.⁷⁶ In the 1790s, Banks' pleas for Japanese plants increased in urgency: 'a single flower or two with a few leaves will generally be sufficient'. He also promised to send the specimens back to Sweden as soon as they had been examined and seen.⁷⁷ Thunberg now expressed support for Britain's plans to initiate trade with Japan, and Banks wrote to Uppsala for advice on a strategy: 'I think I have heard you say that the Government of Japan is so circumstanced that it is probable ships who applied to the northern

⁷² Joseph Banks to Carl Peter Thunberg 17.6.1785. *Thunberg Collection*, Uppsala University Library.

⁷³ It has been suggested that the publication of Kaempfer's travelogue was a result of pressure from Banks.

⁷⁴ Chambers N., *Joseph Banks and the British Museum: the world of collecting, 1770–1830* (London: 2007); Michel W., "Japansk läkekonst i teckningar av Clas Fredrik Hornstedt", in Hornstedt, *Brev från Batavia* 121–125.

⁷⁵ Skuncke M.-C., "Carl Peter Thunbergs japanska resa i 1770-och 1780-talens medier", *Sjuttonhundratals* (2008) 44–62, esp. 54. This article outlines the reception and dissemination of Thunberg's publications on Japan in Europe.

⁷⁶ Joseph Banks to Carl Peter Thunberg 20.8 1782. *Thunberg Collection*, Uppsala University Library.

⁷⁷ Joseph Banks to Carl Peter Thunberg 29.4 1796. *Thunberg Collection*, Uppsala University Library.

Provinces which are independent of the Emperor might be received and admitted to trade'.⁷⁸

The growing British interest in China at this time was also reflected in Banks' communication with other Swedish correspondents. At the close of the eighteenth century Joseph Banks took up correspondence with Peter Johan Bladh, a Swedish supercargo who spent seven years administering the Swedish factory in Canton and himself was an avid amateur botanist. Bladh would provide Banks with trading information and sent specimens of Chinese plants to London.⁷⁹ However, while this one-sided exchange went on, Bladh also corresponded with leading scientific circles in Batavia.⁸⁰

This intermediary role of the Swedes in the decades around 1800 can be illustrated by one further example. Johan Arnold Stützer was another student of Thunberg's, who travelled to Holland in 1784, equipped with letters of recommendation to the Burmans. Like Thunberg earlier, Stützer was helped by Nicolas Burman to get a position as a surgeon on board a VOC ship bound for Batavia. Before leaving, he assured Thunberg in Uppsala that he would do all he could to collect East Indian plants for Sweden.⁸¹

Based in the house of the Batavian Society where Hornstedt had lived only a few years earlier, Stützer undertook several expeditions to the interior of Java, producing extensive journals. Stützer's journal, as yet unpublished, is imbued with the curiosity of the Linnean traveller, containing a wealth of economic and political information as well as observations on flora and fauna. After visiting Japan, Stützer settled in Ceylon in 1790.

In contrast with earlier Swedes, Stützer never returned to his homeland. Instead, he joined the English East India Company, a long-time

⁷⁸ Joseph Banks to Carl Peter Thunberg 17.6 1785. *Thunberg Collection*, Uppsala University Library.

⁷⁹ There are five plants in the Banksian herbarium collected by Bladh. See Bretschneider E., *History of European Botanical discoveries in China* 1 (London: 1898).

⁸⁰ Bladh later became adverse to the aggressiveness of British trading policies in China, and privately drew up a plan for the other European trading companies, including the Dutch, to persuade the Emperor of China to expel the British. Not surprisingly, this was not a project approved by the Swedish East India Company. Birgit Lunclund, *Peter Johan Bladh och Svenska Ostindiska Compagniet åren 1766–84* (Ekenäs: 2008) 43, 50–53.

⁸¹ Information presented here is based on Hoadley M.C. – Svanberg I., "Hunting rhinoceros in Java. Johan Arnold Stützer and his journal 1786–1787", *Svenska Linnésällskapets årsskrift* (1990–1991) 91–141.

wish, through contacts made via a Danish intermediary. Employed by the Civil Medical Departmenat, he was finally appointed Superintendent of smallpox vaccination at Jaffna. Throughout his career, Stützer continued to correspond with Thunberg in Uppsala.

As the British were planning for the invasion of Java in 1811, information on this unknown island was scarce, and British officials were able to draw on Stützers knowledge of the 'languages, manners, and people of that country, both European and Malay'.⁸² Stützer was drawn into the hasty preparations for the invasion, and he joined the expedition as an interpreter. In Java, he witnessed the storming of the palace in Yogyakarta, and it is likely that he took part in the looting of the Royal library, as manuscripts which later were deposited in the India Office Collections in London bear Stützer's name. This, together with his earlier Javanese journal, demonstrate the extent to which the Linnean spirit still lived on: it was necessary to record and 'ask about everything', and to engage in as many subjects as possible. Stützer returned to Ceylon and died in Jaffnapattanam in 1821.

Conclusion

The story of Stützer's life illustrates clearly how Swedes could act as transmitters of knowledge between competing colonial empires at time when, it has been claimed, British expansion acquired an ethos of 'knowledge panic'.⁸³ Through examples mainly concerned with Java, this essay has pointed to the ways in which Swedish naturalists came to acquire a unique position in the scientific networks of the later eighteenth century. This grew out of the longstanding connections between Sweden and Holland, but more importantly the prestige which Swedish natural history had acquired during Linnaeus' lifetime. The Linnean project in Sweden also had strong economic and political undertones, and botany in particular was seen as a deeply patriotic science. Thunberg, Hornstedt, Stützer were all to some extent imbued with the patriotic fervour which had characterized scientific reporting and collecting during the time of Linnaeus; but their association with

⁸² Ibid., 131.

⁸³ Bayly C.A., "Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India", *Modern Asian Studies* 27, 1 (1993) 3-43.

the VOC also meant that they were subject to a more complex set of loyalties. As we have seen, Hornstedt did not hesitate to ransack Dutch collections in order to promote Swedish science, and Thunberg chose to publish his East Indian treatises not in Dutch, but in Swedish and English. I have also argued that the role of Swedish scientists as intermediaries in knowledge networks changed at the end of the eighteenth century. As Sweden sank into scientific obscurity, the men associated with the VOC possessed unique knowledge which could be utilized by Holland's colonial rivals. As the utilitarian thinking in the tradition of Linnaeus was extended into British imperial botany, the Swedes would remain bystanders in a colonial race which was played out on the arena of scientific research.

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UNKNOWN UNKNOWNNS.
IGNORANCE OF THE INDIES AMONG LATE
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTS

Elspeth Jajdelska

In the last twenty years scholars have noted that the book trade did not entirely replace alternative channels for the circulation of knowledge in Europe. Without challenging the widely held model of print's advent as a revolution,¹ these authors have shown that both speech and manuscript continued to play a crucial role in circulating information in the early modern period.² In particular, commercial centres, such as Amsterdam and Venice, have been identified as hubs from which knowledge of political change and of the new world travelled across Europe. More recently, there have been substantial advances in our understanding of the movement of knowledge across social space as well as physical space, in the analysis of communication between people from different spheres of life in Amsterdam.³

This account of knowledge circulating outside printed channels has been both qualified and elaborated in work on the scientific revolution. Shapin, for example, has shown that advances in science were communicated through networks whose membership was defined by rank – specifically by the rank of 'gentleman'.⁴ His work suggests that while the movement of scientific knowledge in England stopped at the borders of gentility, it was surprisingly free to move between ranks (for example between the aristocracy and the lower gentry) within those borders.

As a result, works like Burke's and Shapin's have perhaps encouraged a view of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a time of the expansion of knowledge networks. However, there has

¹ Eisenstein E., *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: 1988).

² Burke P., *A Social History of Knowledge: from Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge: 2000).
Fox A., *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford: 2000).

³ Cook H.J., *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven – London: 2007).

⁴ Shapin S., *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: 1994).

been little or no work on the persistence of barriers to the circulation of knowledge in early modern Britain.

In this chapter I attempt to correct this imbalance through a small case study of the Scots in the Netherlands. I identify evidence that, contrary to the model outlined by Burke (and to a lesser extent by Shapin), every grade of rank in this group continued to obstruct the (non-print) circulation of knowledge in the period. I present evidence that certain categories of Scots knew surprisingly little in particular about the Dutch Indies – ‘surprisingly’ because Scots were involved in social networks in Holland which covered trade, seamanship, medicine and religious life, and which maintained powerful links with Scotland. The failure of this knowledge to circulate had calamitous consequences, as shall be seen.

I offer two explanations for this ‘obstruction’ of knowledge: decorum created constraints on exchanges between members of different classes; and late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Scots in the Netherlands had a strictly utilitarian approach to knowledge.

Scottish links to the Netherlands

The Netherlands was Scotland’s most important trading partner and migrants there worked in a range of ranks, from merchant to common seaman.⁵ They maintained close ties to their homeland.⁶ These economic migrants overlapped to some extent with Scotland’s political exiles.⁷ The exiles also maintained strong ties with Scotland while abroad which allowed them to return home in the years after 1688, when William of Orange and his consort Mary had ascended the British throne. Economic migrants and political exiles were joined by students at the universities of Leiden and Utrecht. They too retained strong ties to their home country.⁸

⁵ Gardner G., *The Scottish Exile Community in the Netherlands, 1660–1690* (East Linton: 2000). Catterall D., *Community without Borders: Scots Migrants and the Changing Face of Power in the Dutch Republic, c. 1600–1700* (Leiden: 2002).

⁶ Catterall, *Community without borders*.

⁷ Gardner, *The Scottish Exile Community in the Netherlands*.

⁸ See for example the experiences of Andrew Fletcher (*Dictionary of National Biography*) and John Boswell (Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, transcript of diary of John Boswell).

These groups had many contacts with those who travelled for the VOC and WIC. Many Scots entered the companies' service, as sailors, soldiers, officers and physicians.⁹ Others exported commodities from the Indies such as pepper, nutmeg, indigo and tobacco back to Scotland.¹⁰ Generations of Scots medical students studied botany in Leiden, where they would have seen plants and curiosities sourced from the Indies.¹¹ Other students also knew of the well-stocked botanic gardens and their curiosities from overseas:

I was in the physicians' garden, where I did see a number of fine herbs and trees, many of both which, and some with the fruit upon them, were preserved in a house all winter. I did likewise see a number of rarities, with many creatures preserved in their perfect shapes, by Doctor Herman [Boerhaave], one of the Professors of Medicine.¹²

Finally, political exiles were hungry for news of military and diplomatic successes and failures and were heavily exposed to the gazette, newsletter and coffee house cultures of Dutch cities.¹³

Different groups of Scots also had opportunities to exchange what they knew with one another. The Scots Kirk in Rotterdam was a central point of contact among all Scots and a powerful force for community cohesion.¹⁴ Scots also tended to deal with Scots merchants for financial credit, and Scots landlords and landladies for board and postal services,¹⁵ as this letter to the Rotterdam merchant Andrew Russell illustrates:

⁹ Cook, *Matters of Exchange*, 194, 196–197. Catterall, *Community without Borders*, 37, 148 and elsewhere.

¹⁰ National Library of Scotland, MS 16503, f.120, f.136. Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, MS Anon Medicine 23A, p. 6, apothecary's receipts including nutmeg as ingredient. National Archives of Scotland, MS RH15/106/143 item 43, MS RH15/106/561 item 21, MS RH15/106/626 item 17.

¹¹ Dingwall H., *Physicians, Surgeons and Apothecaries* (East Linton: 1995) 101–108, 229. Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, transcript of John Boswell's diary, xxv. Cook, *Matters of Exchange* 394.

¹² Erskine J., *Journal of the Hon. John Erskine of Carnock, 1683–87*, ed. Macleod W. (Edinburgh: 1893) 112.

¹³ Gardner, *The Scottish Exile Community*. Bannatyne Club, Darien Papers, vol. I, no. 33, letter dated 5 September 1696. National Library of Scotland, MS 16503, f. 113. National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/592, item 1.

¹⁴ Steven W., *The History of the Scots Church at Rotterdam* (Edinburgh: 1883). Sprunger K.L., *Dutch Puritanism: a History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: 1982).

¹⁵ The Russell correspondence in the National Archives of Scotland shows the merchant's strong preference for Scottish partners. Dealing with a non-Scot required caution – see MS RH15/106/617, item 25.

I intend not to discover want of money to my Landlord by leaving any account uncleard when I com [sic] out of his house I rather be obliged to you as a Scots man abstracting from your undeserved kindness to me a poor Stranger.¹⁶

Scots merchants preferred to deal with Scots captains, skippers and intermediaries. Finally, the Scots in the Netherlands were based in cities, not the country, and in cities which were among the most cosmopolitan in Europe. There was every reason to believe, therefore, that knowledge from the East Indies would reach Scots in the Netherlands through eye witness and physical testimony, and from there circulate to other Scots in exile and to the homeland.

What did Scots know about the Indies?

An ECCO¹⁷ word search for ‘Indies’ in texts published in Edinburgh at the start of the eighteenth century suggests that for most Scots, the ‘Indies’ represented, if anything, a set of very old commonplaces. The Scottish poet Alexander Penicuik writes in 1720:

These, who in Ships on Hills of Billows ride,
To deck *Britannia’s Belles* with *Persian Pride*,
Fly to both *Indies* for their Gold and Spices.¹⁸

An Edinburgh matron’s grave is inscribed in 1663:

*Though this grave short; yet, underneath this stone,
All Female vertues lye, unite in one;
An Marg’rite she, more valuable far,
Than all the jewels, in East Indies are.
For, holy, decent, humble as was she,
Provident, comely, good, to great degree.*¹⁹

Similar perceptions of the Indies as rich and distant are found in Scotland as early as the poetry of Drummond of Hawthornden (1585–1649).

¹⁶ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH15/106/370, item 2.

¹⁷ Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

¹⁸ Pennecuik A., *Streams from Helicon: or, Poems on Various Subjects* (Edinburgh, n.p.: 1720) 174.

¹⁹ Monteith R., *An Theater of Mortality* (Edinburgh, heirs of Andrew Anderson: 1714) 8.

There is no sign here then of any interest in the Dutch Indies. Library catalogues from the period confirm this impression. Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun was an enthusiastic book collector and his collection has been described as one of the two best private libraries in the British Isles at the time.²⁰ Fletcher spent time in the Netherlands, bought books there and maintained contact with Dutch booksellers throughout his life.²¹ Even though he didn't know Dutch, the English language and Latin book markets offered plenty of travel material from Dutch sources, such as John Ray's publication of Rauwolff's itinerary,²² and translations of Struys (1684),²³ Frick (1659)²⁴ and Linschoten (1598).²⁵ Latin texts available for purchase or consultation in the Netherlands included Jacobus Bontius, *De Medicina Indorum*.²⁶ Fletcher bought many books published in the Netherlands, but none of Rauwolff, Struys, Frick, Linschoten in translation, nor of Latin texts on the Dutch East Indies, such as Bontius. He did own travel writing and he also owned translations from Dutch, for example of Van Aitzema's history of the revolt against the Spanish.²⁷ But his travel interests seem to have been focused on Europe, or on non-Dutch travel elsewhere, while his Dutch interests were limited to European political affairs.

George Mackenzie, founder of Edinburgh's Faculty of Advocates library, also spent time in the Netherlands. His library was later dispersed or absorbed into that of the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh. The earliest catalogue is for 1742 and includes Bontius as well as Ray's edition of Rauwolff, but does not have copies of the Struys, Frick or Linschoten. By 1742, this was a collection of 25 000 books, so it is reasonable to assume that their absence suggests the books were not

²⁰ Willems P.J.M., *Bibliotheca Fletcheriana: or, the Extraordinary Library of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun* (Wassenaar: 1999).

²¹ See for example National Library of Scotland, MS 16503, f. 127; 16502, f. 121.

²² Ray J., *A Collection of Curious Travels & Voyages. In Two Tomes. The First Containing Dr. Leonhart Rauwolff's itinerary [...] Translated from the High Dutch by Nicholas Staphorst* (London, S. Smith and B. Walford: 1693).

²³ Struys J.J., *The Perillous and most Unhappy Voyages of John Struys* (London, n.p.: 1684).

²⁴ Frick C., *A Relation of Two Several Voyages Made into the East-Indies, by Christopher Fryke, Surg. and Christopher Schewitzer [...] Done out of the Dutch by S.L.* (London, D. Brown: 1700).

²⁵ Linschoten J., *John Huighen van Linschoten. his Discours of Voyages into ye Easte & West Indies* (London, John Windet for John Wolfe: 1598).

²⁶ Bontius J., *De Medicina Indorum* (Leiden, Frans Haak: 1642).

²⁷ Aitzema L. van, *Notable revolutions, BEEING [sic] a True Relation of What Hap'ned in the United Provinces of the Netherlands in the Years MDCL and MDCLI* (The Hague, William Dugard: 1653).

considered central to a good Scottish collection in the seventeenth century. Eighteenth-century readers at the library did have access to Renneville's translation of Commelin's Dutch account of VOC voyages, first published in English in 1703.²⁸ In fact, by the early eighteenth century, English speaking readers interested in travel literature, whatever its origins, seem to have come to rely heavily on Churchill's multivolume selection.²⁹ The Advocates Library, therefore, suggests that its users were uninterested in most travel writing relating to the VOC or WIC until the eighteenth century, despite the presence of many seventeenth-century books published in the Netherlands.

The sale catalogue for an auction of books in Edinburgh in 1702 tells the same story. Scots were aware of and interested in certain Dutch books, both in Dutch and in translation, but not in the writings of Dutch travellers. The catalogue included Bekker's *World Bewitched* (1691) in Dutch, as well as a Dutch New Testament, a Dutch-English teaching manual and Tulp's *Observationes medicae* (1641). There are also one or two travel texts from non-Dutch sources, but none of the many accounts of VOC or WIC voyages.³⁰

Scots doctors similarly ignored VOC or WIC sources of medical knowledge. The physician Robert Sibbald (1641–1722) was one of the most powerful influences on Scottish medicine in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, helping to found the nation's first botanic garden as well as the Royal College of Physicians and the *Edinburgh Pharmacopoeia*. Sibbald was greatly influenced by his studies in Leiden, where he 'frequented ane apothecaries shop and saw the materia medica'.³¹ When Sibbald returned to Scotland he was zealous to reform his profession. Yet far from wishing to use new foreign species in medicine, he took the position that local plants provide the best cures for local ailments, showing no interest at all in the medical potential of the Dutch East Indies specimens he must have learned about in Leiden.³² James Sutherland, the director of the new Edinburgh botanical garden which Sibbald helped to found, followed his lead. Sutherland's library did have a selection of botanical works relat-

²⁸ Renneville C., *A Collection of Voyages Undertaken by the Dutch East-India Company for the Improvement of Trade and Navigation: Translated into English* (London, Freeman: 1703).

²⁹ Churchill J., *A Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, H.C.: 1704).

³⁰ Anon, *A Catalogue of Excellent and Rare Books, on all Subjects and in Most Languages* (Edinburgh, n.p.: 1702).

³¹ Sibbald R., *The Memoirs of Sir Robert Sibbald, 1641–1722* (London: 1932) 57.

³² *Ibid.*, 64.

ing to the VOC and WIC, as well as standard botanical texts from across Europe.³³ But in his collecting, and presumably in the teaching he conducted in the garden, he focused on the British Isles. He made some requests for overseas seeds from his correspondents in the Netherlands and elsewhere, but his extensive correspondence with James Petiver in London, for example, consists largely of his introductions to Petiver of young Scots heading for the Indies, so that Petiver can make use of them for collecting. Sutherland, in return, apparently uninterested in securing these men's services for himself, asks Petiver for British specimens.³⁴

Case study: the Company of Scotland

This failure of knowledge to circulate can be seen at its most damaging in the downfall of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies. The Company attempted to break into global trade drawing on share capital from every section of Scottish society with disposable income.³⁵ The directors were persuaded by William Paterson, who had spent a long time in the Netherlands as a political exile, to devote its resources to establishing a trading post on the Isthmus of Darien. This was a disaster, with the loss of thousands of lives and all of the Company's capital. The Company's failure can be traced to a series of fatal misjudgements, mistakes which could have been prevented by the efficient circulation of knowledge among Scots within the Netherlands, and between Scots in the Netherlands and the home country.

The directors of the company came disproportionately from the Scottish gentry and had no practical experience of trade. When they commissioned a new fleet of ships, at great expense, in Hamburg and Amsterdam, one of the Scottish factors in Hamburg commissioned by the Company to have the ships built ventured to suggest:

³³ Kelly W.A., "Catalogue of the Library of James Kelly", *The Bibliothek* 14 (1987) 30–107.

³⁴ Transcripts of correspondence in archives of the Royal Botanical Garden, Edinburgh. The originals are in the British Library.

³⁵ For a single volume history of the Company of Scotland see Watt D., *The Price of Scotland: Darien, Union and the Wealth of Nations* (Edinburgh: 2007). For greater detail see Burton J., *The Darien Papers* (Edinburgh: 1849).

Were the whole Concern our own, we should choose rather to Trade so much less, and only with our own Stock than to soare too high at first, the whole Stock of the Danish East India Companys but [unclear symbol] 1 80 000 specie, and they send out a Ship or Two every year and get one home and make every year a Dividend besides the Advance of their Stock, We have had the honour to serve them many Years yet never concernd ourselves in their Stock before last year... We beg your pardon for the liberty we have taken to give our thoughts on a Subject, whereof we ow You to be more Competent Judges yet it may happen, that you are Strangers to some of the particulars above mention'd, and so may serve for your regulation.³⁶

He was ignored, and other Scots merchants with useful potential advice were left unasked. In the matter of a suitable cargo for Darien, they could have drawn on the experience of a merchant like Andrew Russell, based in Rotterdam, and experienced in trading to North America and Surinam. When Russell entered a new market he agonised over the correct cargo, as his extensive correspondence with his Scottish business partner, the trader John Borland, demonstrates.³⁷ Russell's expertise was shared with Scots, such as Borland, whose minister brother Frances had been to Surinam as a preacher and who joined the later expedition to Darien.³⁸ When the directors were choosing a cargo, however, they relied entirely on the authority of an otherwise untraceable unknown, Isaac Blackwell, who had written an account which now seems rather dubious of Darien, in which he defiantly admitted, without explanation, that his account conflicted with that given by other authorities.³⁹ For geography, the directors could have drawn on the experience of many Scots who had served in the Dutch Companies' navies and military or travelled to South America.⁴⁰ Again, however, they relied only on Paterson and Blackwell in their assessment of Darien's climate and suitability for a colony.

³⁶ NLS MS 1914 f. 75r.

³⁷ National Archives of Scotland MS RH15/106/461, 583.

³⁸ Borland F., *Memoirs of Darien, Giving a Short Description of that Countrey* (Glasgow, Hugh Brown: 1715). National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/567, item 1.

³⁹ National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 83.7.1, 1–3, 7, 161. Watts, *The Price of Scotland* 20. Blackwell I., *A Description of the Province and Bay of Darian* (Edinburgh, heirs of Andrew Anderson: 1699). Dampier W., *A New Voyage Round the World* (London, James Knapton: 1697).

⁴⁰ Devine T.M., *Scotland's Empire* (London: 2003) 26, 34. Murdoch S., "The Good, the Bad and the Anonymous: A Preliminary Survey of Scots in the Dutch East Indies 1612–1707", *Northern Scotland* 22 (2002) 1–12.

The Scots were therefore quite unprepared for the heat, disease and physical difficulties they encountered in building a fort.

One of the most serious misjudgements respected the native inhabitants of Darien. The Company's plan was to recruit the indigenous people as potential allies against the Spanish. In this they showed both historical and anthropological (to use an anachronistic term) ignorance. They were apparently quite unaware of Dutch experiences with Caribs and Arawaks in Surinam,⁴¹ or the political economy of alternate cooperation with and domination of native populations elsewhere, such as Batavia.⁴² There were many Scots, such as James Couper, former employee of the VOC and a commander in East Java, who could have explained this history to the directors, had they inquired.⁴³

Even the most apparently learned account of the population of Darien by one of the Scots settlers is muddled and misguided in relation to the Company's aims and ignorant of the expertise of Scots who were not consulted:

Captain *Andraas* [a native leader] has often been at *Panama*, the *Mines* of *Santa Maria*, and the *South-Sea*; The *Spaniards* believing he might be usefull to them, made Him a Captain, by giving Him a stick tip't with Silver, upon which He values himself above others, and that has (we are apt to believe) endeared Him to their Interests; yet the Love of ones Country, and Liberty is so naturall, that we have good Reason to believe that as soon (being a sensible cunning Fellow) as He finds we are able to protect Him, he will heartily join to our Interest.⁴⁴

The very concepts of 'love of country' and 'liberty' applied more to seventeenth-century Scots who had experienced political exile in the Netherlands than to the indigenous people of a colonized territory who are forced to engage or negotiate with two competing groups of Europeans. This writer is clearly unaware of Dutch mercantile experience, but he has read some contemporary work⁴⁵ on Carribean and American peoples:

⁴¹ Cook, *Matters of Exchange* 335.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 182–191.

⁴³ Murdoch "The Good, the Bad and the Anonymous" 66–69.

⁴⁴ Anon, *A Letter, Giving a Description of the Isthmus of Darien (where the Scot's colonie is settled)* (Edinburgh, John Mackie: 1699) 20.

⁴⁵ Most likely Ligon R., *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (London, H. Mosely: 1657) and Warren G., *An Impartial Description of Surinam* (London, William Godbid: 1667).

I could never learn what *Religion* they have, all I could learn was that they neither believe in nor serve the *Devil*: as many other Nations in *America* do.⁴⁶

Some *Writers* of the *Caribbe-Islands*, affirm, that this *Ceremony* of carrying of *Victuals* to the *Dead*, is generall among them; and that the *Devil* comes to the *Sepulchres*, and carries away the *Meat* and *Drink*. But I know the contrarie, having my self taken away these *Offerings*, and eaten them; for I knew that the *Fruits* used on these *Occasions*, were of the choicest; and the *Liquors* of the best sort.⁴⁷

However, he keeps his scholarly descriptions quite separate from his practical conclusions, where he assumes they share the outlook of a Scottish patriot seeking a European ally against a European enemy. And even here he is inconsistent, describing the native people elsewhere in familiar tones as though they were errant children:

These *Indians* We made an Exchainge, or had a Truck, as it is called, for *Knives*, *Pins*, *Needles*, or any such-like Trifles; but in our Dealing with them we found them to be very cunning.⁴⁸

So the knowledge he has acquired through the printed word is separated from the knowledge he needs and might have acquired through the spoken or handwritten word if he had consulted any of the many Scots in a position to advise him.

The same ignorance governed the Scots' expectations of the Spanish. Again, consultation with any of the Scots who had been involved in the VOC and WIC would have prepared them for the outlook of a European state whose colonial power was under threat. Even at the pettiest of levels, Scots merchants were regularly confronted with English and Dutch determination to extract all the duty they could from non-company traders and to protect their monopolies.⁴⁹ At a different level, Scots served as soldiers in the VOC and had every reason to understand the military investment made by European states to protect their trade.⁵⁰ The naïve belief that the Spanish would be happy to lose influence was later identified by Frances Borland, preacher in Surinam, and brother of a trader in the West Indies and settler in

⁴⁶ Anon, *A Letter, Giving a Description* 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁹ Examples are in National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/461, items 4, 5 and 6.

⁵⁰ Murdoch, "The Good, the Bad and the Anonymous".

Darien (mentioned above), as one of the causes of their failure in his 1715 account of the disaster.⁵¹

The directors and other Scots were surprised at Dutch and English hostility to their scheme. In his defence of the Company's directors Andrew Fletcher wrote that the ban on English ships trading with Scots at Darien was unexpected:

It is most certain, that neither the *Dutch* at *Curacao*, the *Danes* at *St Thomas*, the *French* at *St. Christophers*, *Martinico*, *Petitguavis*, or *Hispaniola*, nor the *Portuguese* at the *Maderas*, or *Tessera-Islands*, were, ever to this Hour, denied the Benefit thereof.⁵²

Yet the directors had been given clear warnings of the Crown's attitudes to their plans by the hostility of English representatives at Hamburg and Amsterdam towards their factors.⁵³

The Company's plans for exports from the colony were as vague as those for cargo to it, and again ignored the opportunity to use considerable Scottish expertise. Accounts of Darien by Scots, including those of the Company, expressed no clear aim as to how the colony would make money. Sometimes it seemed that acting as a trading post (presumably through charging duty) was the main goal,⁵⁴ at others there was a crude willingness to believe that the land could simply be plundered for gold. The mysterious Isaac Blackwell, on whom the directors relied so heavily, wrote in his account of the colony:

In short, it's a Rich Countrey with Gold; for I have been told by very Antient Natives of the Place that they have laughed at their *Southern* Neighbours *Peruvians* who have boasted of their having Houses full of Gold⁵⁵

The focus on gold as a possible export shows the vagueness of the directors' knowledge of seventeenth-century trading empires. Scottish merchants like Russell could have described to them in detail the sugar, tobacco and spice trades, being experienced in importing the first two to the Netherlands and exporting the last from the Netherlands to

⁵¹ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien* 99–101.

⁵² Fletcher A., *A short and Impartial View of the Manner and Occasion of the Scots colony's Coming Away from Darien* (Edinburgh, n.p.: 1699), 31.

⁵³ Watt, *The Price of Scotland*.

⁵⁴ Paterson W., *An Abstract of a Letter from a Person of Eminency and Worth in Caledonia* (Boston, n.p.: 1699) 2.

⁵⁵ Blackwell, *A Description of the Province and Bay of Darian*, 4.

Scotland.⁵⁶ Scottish physicians like Sibbald had seen the fruits of VOC botanical exploration during their studies and were surely not blind to the wealth accruing to Dutch ports when cargoes of nutmeg and pepper arrived.⁵⁷ There was no need, then, for the directors to be unaware that plant life could be more important to the new trading empires than metals.⁵⁸ Yet the plant life on Darien, though discussed in some detail in Scottish reports, is never treated as a source of potential wealth, despite claims for the valuable qualities of many plants.⁵⁹ There is a discussion of tobacco being planted for trade, but this is almost an aside.⁶⁰

How did this tragedy of ignorance arise? The letters of Scots discussed below suggest that information failed to circulate for two reasons: rhetorical decorum and a utilitarian attitude to knowledge.

Rhetorical decorum

Decorum has been widely considered in literary analysis of style, but has been comparatively neglected as a cause for silence in early modern Britain. Yet there is evidence that decorum played a powerful part in what got said or written, as well as in how writing was composed. A study of the diarist Samuel Pepys's reading habits showed the importance of propriety in his interpretation of texts. Pepys assessed the text as good or bad insofar as it addressed a specific audience appropriately, given the writer's rank. So a tradesman of little education, for example, should not presume to give instruction to a gentle addressee, and a preacher on the topic of regicide should address the monarch in tones of grief rather than argument.⁶¹ Scots texts suggest that this concept of decorum was at least as powerful north of the border as in Pepys's London, and that it was a major cause of the failure of knowledge to circulate from the Dutch Indies to Scotland.

⁵⁶ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/461 item 2, MS RH 15/106/561, item 21, MS RH 15/106/461, item 6.

⁵⁷ Sibbald, *Memoirs* 58.

⁵⁸ Cook, *Matters of Exchange* 65–68.

⁵⁹ Anon, *A Letter, Giving a Description* 4; Blackwell, *A Description of the Province and Bay of Darien* 3.

⁶⁰ Anon, *A Letter, Giving a Description* 8.

⁶¹ Jajdelska E., "Pepys in the History of Reading", *The Historical Journal* 50 (2007) 549–569.

This is so despite the suggestion from some historians that seventeenth-century Scotland was less hierarchical than other European societies, because of its small size and the absence of a court. Dingwall, for example, argues that the nobility's reliance on doctors for credit reduced the social distance between the two:

The strong impression gained from these monetary transactions is that social barriers were lowered or removed as necessary, and money was lent and borrowed across wide social chasms. The nobility may not have eaten at the same table as their social inferiors, but they were not above borrowing from them.⁶²

However the evidence of manuscript letters suggests that even minor Scottish gentry and aristocracy, whose own children were forced into trade through the poverty of the family estate, nevertheless maintained their identity as gentlemen and women, and that merchants and others did not presume to breach decorum by addressing them on inappropriate topics. Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun was a minor aristocrat and an influential writer on Scottish politics who spent many years on the continent, including time in exile in the Netherlands.⁶³ Fletcher was helped by the Rotterdam factor and merchant Andrew Russell. When Scots political exiles went home after the 1688 change of regime, Fletcher was one of many who thanked Russell for his kindness during their exile:

Sir You may may [sic] veray justly thinck it strange that I have been so long a writing to you and that so unexpected a success may have maid me forget thos who have been kynd to me in my adverse fortune... thinck not that upon paying it [Fletcher's debt to Russell] I imagen my self quit of the obligations I have to you.⁶⁴

Fletcher did indeed take care that Russell was (eventually) repaid.⁶⁵ Yet this should not be taken as an indication that Fletcher had conversed with Russell as an equal, allowing Russell to introduce topics (such as trade) in which he was expert and Fletcher was not. In his published political theory, Fletcher has this to say about trade:

The Examples of Holland, Venice, Tyre and other Cities...But if the Governments of the World were well regulated and men might have the

⁶² Dingwall, *Physicians, Surgeons and Apothecaries* 31.

⁶³ *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁶⁴ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH/106/690, item 7.

⁶⁵ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH/106/708, item 7.

liberty of chusing, they would not be confin'd to such narrow, barren and unwholesom Places, nor live so much at Sea, or in the exercise of a sedentary and unmanly Trade, to foment the Luxury of a few; but would disperse themselves over the World in greater or lesser numbers, according to the goodness of the Soil, and live in a more free and manly way.⁶⁶

A gentleman is free and manly by virtue of his country estate; merchants, however virtuous, are condemned to be unmanly and unfree. Instead of asking Russell's opinion on the Company of Scotland's failure, therefore, Fletcher defended the directors and analysed the disaster as a political misfortune.⁶⁷ This apparently wilful ignorance persisted even when Fletcher's own nephew began a career in trade. This nephew was originally supposed to learn to be a merchant in the Netherlands but after some trouble was found a place on an English East India Company Ship. His elder brother maintained a regular correspondence with his father, but the family were quite uninterested in the exotic parts where the younger son was traveling. His last appearance in the archive is merely an aside that

[Robert] wrytes that his Captain says that it will be a voyage of 4 or 5 years, and that they are to be at China, and that they were all in good health, busy taking in fresh water.⁶⁸

Robert's family were not above a little trading of their own.⁶⁹ But these border crossings between nobility and merchant class were in no way indications that the non-merchant Fletchers considered themselves to have lost caste.

A comparable social distance between gentry and merchants is found throughout Russell's correspondence. This extract is from a typical letter written by his son-in-law, a Scottish merchant at the Scots staple in the Netherlands, Campvere:

Our Very humble Service to James, and al our Sisters, particularly to Christian who has been so very kind to my poor Andrew, who gives his Service to hir.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Fletcher A., *An Account of a Conversation Concerning a Right Regulation of Governments* (Edinburgh, n.p.: 1704) 55.

⁶⁷ Fletcher, *A Short and Impartial View*.

⁶⁸ National Library of Scotland MS 16503 f. 163.

⁶⁹ National Library of Scotland MS 16503 f. 90, f. 94.

⁷⁰ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/807, item 3.

Despite the close family tie, the younger man observes the proprieties of one merchant addressing another in his conclusion. When young Scots gentlemen write to Russell seeking credit, however, their tone is informal, despite the fact these men are far less closely connected to him than Livingstone is:

Sir I told you at parting that I would not stik to trouble you when I needed: Now I have use for two hunder guilders, & have sent the bearer John Forrest, to whom I desire you will give the money, & send with him the copie of what bill you must have for it, & Monsr Hume, who is now here will send you bils by next post after; which will be payd I hope readily enough:

All friends ar well here: I pray give my hearty respects to your wife & your Motherinlaw & all the bairns, specially Christian my duttie, tell her that Mr Spatchcok gives her his Service: I wish you all welfare & am Your Servant & true friend P. Sinclar.⁷¹

Young gentry writing to Russell seem to deliberately flout merchants' customs of care over dates and places in order to distinguish themselves socially from their addressees. This writer gives neither his date nor his location and is almost proud of his incompetence:

I [...] have wrote that note you desire upon the [unclear] of this letter, & have forgott to take the particular date and also the gentlemans name but if you think yr be any informality in this, draw ane other and send it to me and it shall be done as you desire.⁷²

And (astonishingly given their burden of financial responsibility) the directors of the Company of Scotland who were busy commissioning new ships and supervising purchases on the continent took a comparable pride in their own incompetence as merchants:

We took some short view both of Persons and things in Zealand and Rotterdam in Order to render them subservient to the Companys Affairs: And this day we tried here and have not understood any thing but that the Companys affairs are in a very good condition, only we fear we are something late and hope by Diligence to make it up.⁷³

⁷¹ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH15/106/631 item 4.

⁷² National Archive of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/650 item 6.

⁷³ Letter from William Paterson and John Erskine to the directors, National Library of Scotland MS 1914, 63.

I shall still continue my Indeavours not doubting but You'le support me Since at your desires I have undertaken yt which I am afraid you'l find me most unfit.⁷⁴

Tho I cannot pretend to the experience of most others who might have been employed in the Companys Affairs abroad I'l endeavour to be behind none in Diligence and hearty honest Endeavours for their Service.⁷⁵

My Trunks and papers are not yet come from Hamburg otherways I would in the Merchant way send you doubles of our last.⁷⁶

Merchants and gentry were differentiated in their modes of address then, with gentry anxious to distance themselves from their inferiors' style. This affected the choice of legitimate topics for correspondence. The letters suggest that Scots (male) gentry considered politics to be their proper sphere of interest. For an inferior to address them on a matter like commodity prices or botany or anthropology without an explicit invitation to do so could be impertinent. Hence the hesitation with which the Hamburg based Scots factors suggested that the Company's directors should change their business strategy, as quoted earlier:

We know yr Deputies expect great matters, but we differ with them in our Opinion [...] Were the whole Concern our own, we should choose rather to Trade so much less, and only with our own Stock [...] We beg your pardon for the liberty we have taken to give our thoughts on a Subject, whereof we owe You to be more Competent Judges yet it may happen, that you are Strangers to some of the particulars above mention'd, and so may serve for your regulation.⁷⁷

It was of course a fiction that the directors were more competent than the factors, and it was a fiction that the directors were likely to know anything about trading companies in general. The factors needed to hide behind these fictions to justify their impertinence in giving information which had not been asked for (and which was, inevitably, ignored).

If Scots gentlemen and aristocracy considered that they would lose caste if they acquired the knowledge of merchants, what did they think were proper spheres of knowledge for themselves? The diary of James

⁷⁴ National Library of Scotland MS 1914, 67.

⁷⁵ National Library of Scotland MS 1/564/12.

⁷⁶ National Library of Scotland MS GD 1/564/12 f. 85.

⁷⁷ National Library of Scotland MS GD 1/564/12 f. 74, f. 75.

Home of Eccles, who studied in Leiden and finished his legal training in Edinburgh, shows that he spent a substantial portion of each week in Edinburgh coffee houses reading or hearing news. From the diary it is also clear that 'news' refers entirely to military-political news.⁷⁸ Military-political events also dominate the booklist of another of the Fletcher family in the 1750s. Young Frances Fletcher had been told by his master to buy standard classical authors as well as a large map of Europe 'for learning Geografy' and a plan of wars of Europe'.⁷⁹

For their part, merchants were not indifferent to politics, and they did mention political and military events in their letters. But they did so not as a matter of course, but only when the material either related directly to their own personal aspirations (in particular the freedom of Presbyterian worship) or, more usually, to affairs which affected their own trade:

I have advice this day from New England that [unclear] may bear a good price all this year & the Reason given is Mr Randolphs staving away most of ye Jersey men & french Interloopers, which if you please I next shall Inclose to you.⁸⁰

Scottish merchants also permitted themselves to make religious observations, usually to relatives. But these are rare digressions from the central topics of business and, where the correspondents are acquainted or related, health.

Utility

One explanation for this division of topics by social group and class is that the relevance of information was judged by its utility to the recipient. There were good reasons why this would apply to written correspondence. Letters were expensive, in time, materials (paper and ink), and transport (for both parties). The lack of leisure time for example is an important factor in merchants' letter writing. John Borland signs himself to Russell 'in haste', and many other letters to Russell end the same way, or express time constraints.⁸¹ This was not simply a strategy

⁷⁸ Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, MS 'Diary of James Home of Eccles'.

⁷⁹ National Library of Scotland, MS 17065, f. 2, f. 3.

⁸⁰ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/461, item 6.

⁸¹ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/583, item 10.

to keep letters short. Russell is surely sincere when writes to his wife with the news of her father's death, saying, "I am troubled about yor Broyr I have not tyme to wryte to him".⁸² A John Anderson identifies shortage of time as a feature of merchant life in his letter to Russell (and simultaneously identifies himself as a gentleman):

I woud have written to you more frequently, but knowing that there is no man in your circumstances but he hath bussines that keeps him frequently employed, I was afraid lest it might have proved troublesom to you.⁸³

The costs and uncertainty of delivery are also important in discouraging non-essential and non-useful information.

What then was considered to be important enough to include in a letter? The health of writers and their family and acquaintance is a high priority, unsurprisingly given life expectancy in the era. Few letters, whether by gentry or not, do not touch on this topic, and many press anxiously for information.⁸⁴ Financial and business affairs are also central, always to merchants and sometimes to gentry. Among gentry, advice and discipline from older men to their sons and juniors is judged to be worth writing about, as the advice of Henry Fletcher to his son in Leiden illustrates. Pious reflections can be relevant in troubled times, as the letters of Russell's son-in-law on the death of his children illustrate.⁸⁵ And finally, news, defined as military and political news is letter-worthy, although subject to anxieties that political opinions will fall into the wrong hands. Among gentry this is always worth passing on in its own right. For merchants there must be an immediate personal consequence of the news, usually relating to trade.

What is apparently not considered relevant in a letter is what present day readers and writers might categorise as the simply 'interesting'. While gentry and merchants had different ideas about what kind of information was useful, they were united in the unspoken assumption that information should be useful.

Even on the Amsterdam bourse or, in the early eighteenth century, on the London exchange, merchants came less to mingle and make

⁸² National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/143, item 41.

⁸³ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/683, item 7.

⁸⁴ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/592, item 1.

⁸⁵ National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/810.

new contacts than to meet with specific people from their own circle or broker an introduction to someone from a different circle:

In this place [the London exchange] all merchants masters of shippes and trading people meet on business – from 2 till 3 o'clock at which time the gates of the Exchange are shut – here too all different nations have places allotted to themselves where people of that nation may always be found – for instance – the Scotch Walk – all people that have business with Scotchmen find them there – so of – French Walk – Spanish Walk – Turkish Walk – American Walk – Dutch Walk – &c. &c.⁸⁶

Yesterday on ye burse Ja: Normborgh brought to me one de Grave of Dort who came along wt him to the packhouse.⁸⁷

In these accounts, the bourse is not a place where people from different groups might mingle but a place where one could either meet one's own kind, or arrange to meet a new person by appointment.

The evidence of these archives can therefore explain how the Darien disaster of ignorance came about, despite the impression given elsewhere of an era of rapidly circulating knowledge. Scottish gentry and aristocracy were conscious that their country was poor and backward and the directors thought of their venture as a political and patriotic enterprise, not a commercial one.⁸⁸ They were impeded from finding out what they needed to know by the need to maintain caste. Their self-image as political actors, rather than traders, explains why they were far more swayed by the 'strategic vision' of a coffee-house politician like William Paterson than by the experience of a merchant class who refrained from breaching decorum.

Circulation of knowledge and enlightenment

Cook has written of the cross-disciplinary nature of the flowering of Dutch science, arguing that Dutch learning was inextricable from utilitarian knowledge, including a utilitarian approach to knowledge

⁸⁶ Creech W., *Edinburgh Bookseller, Transcript of Travel diary*, Edinburgh Central Library, Y2325C91.

⁸⁷ Letter from Andrew Russell's brother-in-law, National Archives of Scotland, MS RH 15/106/561, item 21.

⁸⁸ Emerson R.L., "Sir Robert Sibbald, Kt, the Royal Society of Scotland and the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment", *Annals of Science* 45 (1988) 41–72, 62.

of the new lands which the VOC and WIC controlled.⁸⁹ The intellectual flowering of Scotland in the mid to late eighteenth century is characterised by a similar movement of knowledge between different spheres. To pick only the most obvious example, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* argues not just from political abstractions but from the details of a pin factory or the skills of a ploughman.

What can explain this intellectual transformation in Scotland between Darien and the Enlightenment? Did the Dutch circulation of knowledge happen because decorum and utility had less hold over Dutch thinkers and scientists than over their Scottish counterparts? Or was it that this knowledge passed the test of utility among the Dutch because their trading monopoly made it useful in a way it could not be to the Scots? Finding answers to these questions will let us understand who in Europe read the texts relating to the VOC and WIC, and why. This in turn will allow us to assess their impact more accurately.

⁸⁹ Cook, *Matters of Exchange* 42–81.

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COLONIAL OBJECTS AND THE DISPLAY OF POWER. THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE CABINET OF WILLIAM V AND THE DUTCH INDIA COMPANIES

Edwin van Meerkerk

It may just have started with a grieving toddler. William was only three years old when his father died. The latter, William IV, stadtholder of the Dutch United Provinces, suddenly passed away in 1751, leaving a wife and two children: Caroline, aged ten, and William, the three year old heir. Only four years earlier, William IV had been erected as hereditary head of state, thus acquiring the most powerful position anyone had ever had in the mixed constitution of the Dutch Republic. His son, now called William V, must have been unaware of his new position, but was obviously saddened by the loss of his father. One of the first things his mother Anne of Hanover did, was to acquire the first part of what was to become one of Europe's most outstanding collections of naturalia and antiques.¹ Young William is said to have marvelled at the display of stuffed animals and statues, and remained extraordinarily attached to his collection for the rest of his life. If Anne had tried to comfort her children by establishing the institution, she had clearly succeeded in her objective.

The private collection of the princes of Orange, stadtholders of the Dutch Republic, had severely suffered from the political turmoil of the early eighteenth century. After the death of William III in 1702, they were debarred from power in most of the country and the King of Prussia had claimed large parts of the princely heritage, as William left no heirs. Only during the 1730s did William IV, a nephew of William III, start building a new collection that was to reflect the status and lineage of the House of Orange. After his premature death at the age of 40, this task was left to his widow, and later to his son, William V. The collection of William V, which he acquired jointly with

¹ Pieters F.F.J.M., "Notes on the Menagerie and Zoological Cabinet of Stadholder William V of Holland, directed by Aernoud Vosmaer", *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History* 9 (1980) 540.

his wife Wilhelmine of Prussia, therefore is a fascinating case of royal and princely collections in the late eighteenth century. Their cabinet reflected for the most part their personal tastes (for the part they acquired) and circumstances (in the case of gifts). And it was precisely during this period that the attitude towards such collections changed radically, as did the political climate in general. William, who was to die in exile in 1806, was strongly aware of the changes in society and politics – though for the most part he opposed them.

Power and Art

As Tim Blanning has convincingly argued, ‘the greater the doubts about the stability or legitimacy of a throne, the greater the need for display’.² Blanning addresses the tensions in society that were already highlighted by Habermas,³ involving the so called ‘rise of the public sphere’ and the different roles of court and bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century. For a Dutch stadtholder, these tensions were by definition more explicit, as he was supposed to play the role of a king, while at the same time recognizing his fundamental position as a civil servant, appointed by the seven separate Estates within the Republic. His world was both public and private by definition and he was both an ordinary citizen (and was treated as such) as well as a prince of royal descent (and behaved as such). These ambiguities once more make the attitude of William V towards public cultural display an intriguing example of enlightenment developments. By the time of the separation of the art gallery and cabinet of William V from the personal quarters of the stadtholder, in 1766, art had already become a matter of bourgeois concerns, rather than just an elite matter.⁴ In the context of the largely bourgeois Dutch Republic, this was seen in a rise of private clubs and societies devoted to science, art, and literature outside circles of the higher bourgeoisie. The collection, although it was originally conceived as a private one, is thus justly considered to be the first public museum in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the institution as well

² Blanning T.C.W., *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660–1789* (Oxford: 2002) 32.

³ Habermas J., *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied 1968).

⁴ Blanning, *The Culture of Power* 106–107.

as the objects on display must reflect a strong tension between their private and royal origins and their public and bourgeois functions.

A considerable part of the cabinet was formed by gifts from the territories exploited by the Dutch East and West India Companies. Both organizations were still officially private enterprises, but William as the head of State presided them, at least in name. The position of colonial artefacts and naturalia may therefore serve as an indicator of the development of colonialism in late eighteenth century Holland. The study of the relationship between colonialism and culture has from the onset focused on (literary) texts that were supposed be a reflection of and have given direction to a discourse of imperialism. Material objects have for a long time been neglected in this field of study, until several museologists started to pay attention to the display of artefacts and its relation to colonialism.⁵ Ethnographic museums in the twentieth century are said to 'exhibit ideas about the "other" in the earlier, cruder forms left over from the time in which the ideas came into being, and not in the glossier disguised forms into which they have developed and in which they are found in many art and history museums.'⁶ Such correlation between an discourse of western superiority and colonial exhibitions is found in other contexts as well and this may indeed explain the joint display of animals and plants together with colonial and other oriental objects in William V's cabinet – the 'cruder forms' referred to above. And insofar as the models of Chinese craftsmanship (as oriental, not as colonial artefacts) served as objects of admiration, this may still be interpreted as part of the colonialist paradigm.⁷

In postcolonial studies, modern museums have been disclosed as instruments of western imperialism. The study of museums, however, is restricted by and large to nineteenth and twentieth century museums and the relationship of museums, as institutions as well as sites of display, to the state. Whenever the origins of museums are discussed it is also a nineteenth-century issue, in which museums are discussed in comparison to other forms of exhibition and the rise of new branches

⁵ Barringer T. – Flynn T. (eds.), *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (London: 1998) 2–4.

⁶ Karp I., "Other Cultures in Museum Perspective" in: Karp I. – Lavine S. (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington DC.: 1991) 379.

⁷ Bhabha H.K., *The Location of Culture* (London: 1994) 85–92. China obviously was not a colony, but it still was one of the many trading posts in the VOC network.

of science en historical method in that period. For the eighteenth century, none of these issues was as evident as they may seem to be in the twenty-first century. Large-scale exhibitions, the nation state and even imperialism may be discerned in retrospect but there was no common vocabulary for these phenomena and developments at the time.

On the brink of modernity several ideas about man and society fought for precedence. On one side there were the great concepts of Enlightenment: the education of man, the participation of the citizen in society, the ordering and classifying of nature. All of these can clearly be connected to the establishment of museums and other such public institutions as libraries, archives, schools and new scientific organizations. In opening their cabinet for the public as well as in supporting the scientific work of its director, Arnout Vosmaer, William and Wilhelmine neatly aligned with these developments. There was, however, also another current of thought within Dutch society, one that may be called conservative – though the term is somewhat anachronistic. The core of this thought, which never succeeded in becoming a coherent whole, was the idea of balance. According to William V and his advisors there ought to be equilibrium between the power of the Estates and that of the stadtholder and between church and secular society. In this view there was little room for change, at least on a structural level. The only change that some conservatives considered (Wilhelmine most prominent among them) was one towards enlightened despotism.⁸ To be sure, this was not a debate about power, but about the best way to serve the people and the commonwealth. In William's view both were best served by the stadtholdership as representation of the public interest, tradition, and the religious heritage of the Dutch Republic.⁹ The establishment of a private museum open for public use fits neatly in such a view as well.

The museum in this early stage of its development was hard to distinguish from traditional private collections. These collections, aside from displaying the knowledge of its owner, served as part of networks of patronage. Its objects were used in the discourse of giving and receiving that was characteristic of early modern patronage. As

⁸ Velema W.R.E., *Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic. The Political Thought of Elie Luzac (1721–1796)* (Assen: 1993).

⁹ Meerkerk E. van, *Willem V en Wilhelmina van Pruisen: De Laatste Stadhouders* (Amsterdam: 2009) 92–94.

possessor of one of the most outstanding collections of natural history, William V held a powerful position as a patron of the arts. From the late 1780s onward, the financial situation of the princely family deteriorated. The civil war of 1784–1787 had cost them a lot, and their treasurer pleaded for severe cuts in expenditure. Even though William seems to have ignored these calls (Wilhelmine was more inclined to follow the advice), there was no more money for the acquisition of new objects for the gallery.¹⁰ In the early years entire collections had been added to the cabinet, but now its expansion depended mainly on gifts. In their love for the collection, William and Wilhelmine had always been reluctant to give much of their collection away, and now this became even less likely. Whether this influenced their authority as patrons of the arts is hard to say. Given the renown of the cabinet and the political position of the stadtholder, it may well have played no role of significance. Even by receiving gifts, William was confirmed in his position as patron of the arts: ‘tout ceux qui possèdent quelque pièce curieuse se font un devoir d’en faire part à un prince généreux, ami & protecteur des sciences & des arts’,¹¹ an observer wrote.

The collection

As William V took up his tasks at reaching the age of eighteen in 1766, he was also appointed as Supreme Head of the East and West India Companies, a function that had been created for his father when he was proclaimed hereditary stadtholder of the Dutch Republic. From that moment on, William formally played a pivotal role in the colonial policy and trade. In reality, William was hardly ever present at meetings of the board of directors (the ‘Heeren XVII’) and did not intervene in company policy. In fact, the way William V approached the overseas possessions and trading posts was remarkably the same as his home rule. Being a king without a crown, an executive bureaucrat with royal ambitions, he heavily depended on trustees in boards and

¹⁰ Woelderink B., “Jacob Carel Reigersman, Thesaurier-Generaal van Prins Willem V 1761–1788”, *Jaarboek Oranje-Nassau Museum* (1997) 133–147.

¹¹ L'Honoré S-F., *La Hollande au dix huitième siècle, ou nouvelles lettres, contenant des remarques et des observations sur les principales villes, la religion, le gouvernement, le commerce, la navigation, les arts, les sciences, les coutumes, les usages & les moeurs des habitants de cette province* (The Hague, Detune: 1779) 59.

committees on national, provincial and local levels. His prerogatives were mostly restricted to appointment rights, and even when he was allowed to attend assemblies as member or observer, he could only seldom find the time to do so. His authority thus depended on his power to appoint and discharge.

The part of William's personal archive dealing with the overseas companies does in this respect resemble the rest of his archives. It mainly consists of correspondences with applicants, delegates and other officials on matters of vacancies and assignments. For this, it did not really matter where the function had to be fulfilled. As a matter of fact, William may not have had a real clue as to the remoteness of 'his' colonies, having never travelled further than Nassau or London. Cultural and zoological objects William received were offered in quite the same way as gifts from local representatives in the Netherlands. For that matter, it did not matter whether he would receive jewellery, rare animals, or even tea – the latter was indeed sent annually as a gift in a special case from Canton.¹² Any gift served to strengthen the ties between ruler and representative and to materialize social capital.

One example may illustrate this. In 1780, colonel Robert Jacob Gordon, a VOC-employee at the Cape, sent a skeleton and a skin of a giraffe and some bones and an entire skin of a second one to the Dutch Republic as a gift to the stadtholder. The first specimen was stuffed and exposed in the princely cabinet and was widely known as a great attraction. Interestingly, Gordon sent the giraffe to the Leiden professor Johann Allamand and not to Vosmaer. Even though Allamand was the supervisor of the natural history museum of the Leiden university, the giraffe did end up in The Hague.¹³ Why did Gordon present the giraffe he shot a year earlier to the stadtholder? And why did he not send it directly to the princely cabinet? Gordon knew both naturalists personally, though his acquaintance with Allamand went back much further.¹⁴ In the early 1780s he seems to have had a hard time in his professional life, which may explain his hesitation in sending the giraffes directly to Vosmaer. The governor of the Cape Colony, as we shall see below, demonstrated his allegiance to the stadtholder

¹² Jörg C.J.A., *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade* (The Hague: 1982) 342, 345.

¹³ Rookmaaker L.C., *The Zoological Exploration of Southern Africa* (Rotterdam-Brookfield: 1989) 119.

¹⁴ Ibid., 60, and Cullinan P., *Robert Jacob Gordon 1743–1795: the Man and his Travels at the Cape* (Cape Town: 1992) 22.

by regularly sending specimens to Holland. The explanation for the two animals sent by Gordon to the prince (beside the giraffes he also donated a springbok, in 1774), may very well lie in the good relationship he had to keep with the governor. In that view, the central position of the princely zoo and cabinet, and by consequence that of Vosmaer, must be seen as a reflection of the political hierarchy in the India Companies.

Before the establishment of the cabinet as a separate public institution, several earlier collections performed similar functions in Dutch society. Earlier stadtholders, most notably Frederick Henry (r. 1625–1647) and William III (r. 1672–1702), had acquired outstanding collections of art and natural history as well as live exotic animals. Private collections of East India Company directors, such as the Amsterdam mayor Nicolaas Witsen (1641–1717),¹⁵ also gained renown for their oriental objects. Thanks to the contributions from mainly the Dutch East India Company botany in the Netherlands had flourished from the end of the sixteenth century until well into the eighteenth century. After 1750 the leading role of Dutch botany declined.¹⁶ The early collections were never public in the modern sense of the word, but they were neither completely private. The cabinet of William V was different in this respect, that it was indeed established as a public institution, with its proper building, opening hours and an entry fee. The rationale behind its collection was museological rather than personal. That is what makes this cabinet a museum rather than a traditional cabinet of curiosities. Moreover, as has been said above, William V and Wilhelmine were personally involved in the building of most of the collection. In the case of oriental objects and Asian, African, and American naturalia, their collection was made up for a large part of gifts from East and West India Company servants. Also, collections from orientalists and natural historians were bought at auctions, chiefly at the advice of director Vosmaer.

Even though William IV had inherited a small collection of art and other objects, to which he had added a modest personal choice of

¹⁵ Peters M., *Mercator Sapiens (De Wijze Koopman): het Wereldwijde Onderzoek van Nicolaes Witsen (1641–1717), Burgemeester en VOC-bevindhebber van Amsterdam* (Groningen: 2008).

¹⁶ Smit P., “The Rijksherbarium and the Scientific and Social Conditions which Influenced its Foundation”, *Blumea: a Journal of Plant-taxonomy and Plant-geography* 25 (1979) 5–11.

mainly paintings, the stadtholder's cabinet only started taking proper shape under Anne of Hanover in the early 1750s and under the joint direction of William V and Wilhelmine after their marriage in 1767. It was mainly William whose apparent interest in such matters caused an increase in the collection of natural objects, such as stuffed animals, insects, plants, and corals, whereas Wilhelmina laid most interest in (western) paintings. The collection of roman antiques was only added to occasionally. After 1767 European paintings and sculptures were displayed in a separate corridor, whereas the rest of the collection, the cabinet proper, was accommodated in a special building opposite the working quarters of the prince. Each part of the collection was managed by a director. The natural historian Arnout Vosmaer was in charge of the cabinet, as well as of the princely zoo, which was located outside The Hague, and court painter T.P.C. Haag was director of the art corridor.

A visitor to the cabinet would have to register beforehand in order to visit it in a building opposite the princely quarters in The Hague. Admission was free from noon to one p.m., but for three guilders doors would be opened in the morning or afternoon as well.¹⁷ The cabinet attracted many visitors: in a summer season some 1,860 people marvelled at its curiosities, according to the best selling city guide to The Hague, *Guide, ou nouvelle description de La Haye*.¹⁸ Besides these official regulations, friends and acquaintances regularly asked director Vosmaer permission to visit the cabinet 'for a small half hour' with their guests, or to ask this favour for their guests by themselves. These might then even be guided through the collection by Vosmaer's assistant Vroeg or the domestic servant – who made up Vosmaer's entire staff by the way.¹⁹ Naturally, the tone of the request varied with the status of the correspondent. William's chamberlain and close friend Heiden Reinestein, for instance, would simply announce his visit:

General Major Count Komarzowsky, in Polish service, recommended by prince Caunitz, will be visiting the cabinet of paintings tomorrow at

¹⁷ Lunsingh Scheurleer Th. H., "De Stadhouderlijke Verzamelingen", in: Id. e.a., *150 Jaar Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Koninklijk Penningkabinet* (The Hague: 1967) 11–50.

¹⁸ *Guide, ou Nouvelle Description de La Haye et de ses Environs* (The Hague, Société des Libraires : 1785) 256.

¹⁹ Cf. J.C. Reigersman to Vosmaer, 14 July 1761, University Library Leiden, BPL 246.

eleven, and afterward will wish to see the cabinet of naturalia, for which the director Vosmaer is requested by myself to show this.²⁰

A more humble courtier like Jean Frédéric Euler, teacher of mathematics to the sons of William and Wilhelmine, would rather ask for 'the favour of being shown the cabinet of natural history [at] the most convenient time'.²¹

On entering the building, one was led upstairs through the library up to the third floor. The library was supervised by a former teacher of William V, Louis de Joncourt, to whom one might address oneself to consult or even lend books. There were no opening hours for the library: admission was by request. In two rooms and a great hall it contained some 8,000 books and several manuscripts and about 14,000 plates. The scientific instruments were kept in a separate third room, in which models of shipbuilding and fortification were also on display. The first room regular visitors would enter was located on the third floor. It was filled with the skeletons of exotic, mainly African, animals, with the exception of the giraffe, which only fitted in the attic. A second room contained armoury, clothing, pottery, models of houses and many more objects from China, Ceylon and other parts of the East Indies. The tour continued on the second floor (the 'premier étage'), which formed the heart of the cabinet with its 'objects of art and nature'. The *Guide* states that only naming the most precious objects contained in these five rooms would take up more space than the entire 340 page city guide. On the same floor one was finally shown the coins and antiquities, which were kept under supervision by the philosopher François Hemsterhuis.²² In these rooms, naturalia and art were not separated, something which visitors sometimes complained about.²³ Both in size and in renown, the naturalia formed the most important part of the cabinet. Here, rather than in the collection

²⁰ 'Le général major comte Komarzowsky, en service polonoise, recommandé du prince de Caunitz, visitera demain à onze heures le cabinet des tableaux, et après voudra voir le cabinet d'histoire naturelle, pour lequel le directeur Vosmaer est prié de moi-même de le montrer'. S.P.A. van Heiden Reinestein to Vosmaer, 16 June 1782, University Library Leiden, BPL 246.

²¹ J.F. Euler to Vosmaer, undated, University Library Leiden, BPL 246.

²² *Guide, ou Nouvelle Description* 252–265.

²³ Pieters F.F.J.M., "Het Schatrijke Naturaliënkabinet van Stadhouder Willem V onder Directoraat van Topverzamelaar Arnout Vosmaer", in: Sliggers B.C. – Besse-link M.H. (eds.), *Het Verdwenen Museum: Natuurhistorische Verzamelingen 1750–1850* (Haarlem: 2002) 33.

of Asiatic objects, the colonial influence was most strongly felt, as is underlined in the *Guide*:

The cabinet of natural history, being rich already, daily grows further, either by acquisitions that are paid for, or by the cares of the governors and directors of the Dutch possessions in the two Indies. They make an effort to send whatever they can of the most curious and rare.²⁴

The most detailed description of the cabinet was made by the French, when they confiscated all princely possessions after the invasion of 1795. It took five trips to bring all objects to Paris, including the transport of live stock from the zoo from the Loo palace near Apeldoorn. Several, though not all, lists describing the contents of each transport remain, giving a detailed insight in the artefacts of the cabinet.²⁵ The largest and most important part consisted of the objects of natural history. The stuffed animals and many species in jars were brought over to the former royal collections of natural history in Paris. The best description of many of these had already been made by Vosmaer in his series of published descriptions. After the revolutionary years, it proved extremely difficult to identify the former possessions of the stadtholder, and the majority of them were never returned.

The colonial objects described by the French officials show a relatively large number of Chinese objects and models. This is surprising, given the fact that the Dutch possessions were concentrated in the Indonesian archipelago and on Ceylon. Trade with China, which had never been dominant for the East India Company, had even deteriorated over the last decades.²⁶ The many models of houses and ships, the complete apothecary, clothing and weapons served to illustrate the cultural state of affairs in China as the most 'elevated' nation of Asia. The Chinese objects were considered of the utmost importance by the French authorities. Their message was political and anthropological

²⁴ 'Le cabinet d'Histoire Naturelle, déjà si riche s'accroît tous les jours davantage, ou par des acquisitions à prix d'argent, ou par les soins des Gouverneurs et Directeurs des possessions Hollandoises dans les deux Indes, qui se font un devoir et un plaisir d'y envoyer ce qu'ils peuvent découvrir et de plus curieux'. *Guide, ou Nouvelle Description* 260.

²⁵ Campen J. van, *De Haagse Jurist Jean Theodore Royer (1737–1807) en zijn Verzameling Chinese Voorwerpen* (Hilversum: 2000) 282–286.

²⁶ Jong J.J. de, *De Waaijer van het Fortuin: van Handelscompagnie tot Koloniaal Imperium: de Nederlanders in Azië en de Indonesische Archipel 1595–1950* (The Hague: 1998) 141–149; Jacobs, E.M. *Merchant in Asia. The Trade of the Dutch East India Company during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: 2006) 195.

rather than aesthetical. Besides these testimonials of Chinese, and also Japanese and Javanese, society, there were also many boxes, cabinets and cutlery made of ivory, lacquer, silver, and porcelain, which may rather have been kept for their aesthetic qualities.²⁷

The display of colonial objects in William's cabinet did not stand by itself. Not only was it part of a larger display of naturalia, antiques and art, it was part of a broader cultural programme displayed by William and Wilhelmine, in which especially theatre and music played an important role. All family members were strongly attached to music and drama, both as actors and musicians as well as by organising performances and attending public concerts and plays. Hardly any of this was done in private, so that these cultural 'hobbies' served social and political goals as well. In this respect they were not different from any of their contemporary rulers, but the crux lies in the details. The princes of Orange did not possess a private or court theatre, but instead leased a lodge in the civic theatre of The Hague. Although the House of Orange owned a considerable number of palaces and houses within the dominion of the Dutch Republic, their quarters in The Hague were an integral part of the residence of both the Estates of the province of Holland and of the Estates General, which represented all seven provinces. In order to visit their private collection of antiques and orientalia, William and Wilhelmine had to cross the open air market of the town – one they actually frequented regularly. As has been pointed out above, the Dutch stadtholders were kings without a crown and their cultural behaviour was a complex interplay between the life of a private citizen and that of a monarch.

In such a setting the cabinet must also be seen. Anyone visiting it was aware of its owners and their role in Dutch society. It was part of the position of William and Wilhelmine in Dutch society in general and in the city of The Hague in particular. According to the *Guide ou nouvelle description de La Haye*, the cabinet – here not unjustifiably called 'musaeum' – is listed among the 'most remarkable [...] most precious and most worthy of curiosity' of the town. An outstanding fact that is mentioned in this 1783 city guide is that this public service is funded by the stadtholder 'with the sole purpose of contributing to public

²⁷ Campen, *De Haagse Jurist Jean Theodore Royer* 211–213.

use and satisfaction'.²⁸ Though such an appraisal may have overstated things slightly, it underlines the fact that the public character of the cabinet was noteworthy at the time.

Vosmaer

The cabinet was frequently visited by botanists and naturalists touring the continent. It was indeed one of the highlights of the Dutch stage of a Grand Tour, together with the University of Leiden, the city of Amsterdam and the port of Rotterdam. The British traveller Thomas Pennant in his travel log shows no sign of noticing a specific 'colonial' aspect of the cabinet:

Visited the Prince's Cabinet, under direction of M. Vosmaer, a frenchified Dutchman, extremely ignorant. The curiosities are kept in five rooms and are very fine; the animals in spirits are numerous, among them Lizard with a fin on its back engraved in Seba. There is a skeleton of a vast Antelope. Among the birds are the male and female Cormorant; [...] the minerals and shells in this cabinet are very good.²⁹

If this shows anything, it is the emphasis naturalists laid on the diversity and quality of collections. The origins of the species on display do not figure in such accounts – at least not with any political bias.

Despite his reputed ignorance, Vosmaer supervised an extraordinary collection. In his position as director of the princely zoo and cabinet, he was a logical reference point for botanists and zoologists returning from Africa or Asia, such as VOC-employee and zoologist Robert Jacob Gordon, who visited Vosmaer after his first voyage to South Africa in 1773–1774. This contact seems to have been inspired by Vosmaer's *position*, rather than his personal qualities, as Gordon appears not to have corresponded with him.³⁰

For naturalists like Vosmaer, the uniqueness of any specimen was the most important criterion for its acquisition, more so than its origins

²⁸ '[...] qui y consacre généreusement des sommes considérables, uniquement en vue de contribuer à l'utilité et à la satisfaction publiques'. *Guide, ou Nouvelle Description* 252–253.

²⁹ Pennant does not mention the origin of the objects, nor does he refer to Dutch colonial possessions. Whether that would have been a logical thing to remark is, however, hard to say. Thomas Pennant, *Tour on the Continent 1765*, ed. G.R. de Beer (London: 1948) 155–156.

³⁰ Rookmaaker, *The Zoological Exploration* 61, 68.

or the effect it might have on a political level. In his remaining correspondence in the Leiden university library, the exchanges with botanists and collectors are significantly more extended than those with public figures, who mostly wrote him to announce or request a visit to the cabinet. Vosmaer discussed prices for collections that were offered for sale, the quality of books and manuscripts, and the whereabouts of objects he or correspondents were looking for. Nowhere can he be caught at propagating an imperialist point of view, or even a subservient role in the public image of the prince he served. Vosmaer does not directly seem to have corresponded with officials of the East or West India Companies, nor did he make any effort to enlarge the colonial part of his collection. It is rare types of animals and coins he was after, that seems to have been all there was to it for him.

The strict scientific stance of Vosmaer neatly fits in with the position of the cabinet as a public institution. He even physically contributed to this, by selling his collection to his new employer in 1756.³¹ After the establishment of the separate cabinet premises in 1767, Vosmaer lived in the same building as his precious collection. Only four years before he joined the stadtholder's court, he had managed to obtain a considerable part of the famous collection of Albert Seba (1665–1735), whose multivolume description of the same collection he was to edit in the following years.³² Vosmaer's, and by consequence William's, cabinet, was thus given a magnificent genealogy. Now the cabinet represented the heritage of the great age of Dutch botany and natural history, as William V represented – or wished to represent – the Golden Age of Frederick Henry and William III. That Seba's (and Vosmaer's) presentation of nature along seventeenth century categories was by then very outdated – just like princely rule was soon to be considered out of time – must be the irony of history.

In addition to his tasks as curator and manager of the princely cabinet, Vosmaer regularly published descriptions of new species found in the Indies by Dutch company officials and brought to his care – either alive or dead. The series of wonderfully illustrated descriptions significantly added to the renown of the cabinet and the stadtholder's zoo

³¹ Pieters, "Notes on the menagerie" 541.

³² Recently published in facsimile: Seba A., *Cabinet of natural curiosities: Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri 1734–1765* (Cologne: 2001).

at Voorburg. The series was clearly sponsored by William V, with its quality paper and hand coloured plates. On the title page and sometimes also in the description the patronage of the stadtholder is further underlined. In a description of a warthog, the role of William V in finding and displaying the animal is underlined from the name of the ship it was transported on to his role as benefactor allowing the Dutch public to come and see the animal:

This remarkable creature [...] has been brought from the Cape of Good Hope aboard one of the East Indian ships, named the *Hereditary Prince*, to His Illustrious Highness the Lord Prince of Orange and Nassau, hereditary stadtholder etc. etc. etc. of these Lands. We owe the knowledge and possession to the [...] Governor of the Cape, whose continuous attention for the furthering of the general science of nature [...] has given so many pleasant and wondrous objects to the Princely collections of nature.³³

In addition to this description Vosmaer published thirty-four instalments with unique illustrated descriptions of mainly Asian and African animals. Many of these had lived in the princely menagerie before being transferred to the cabinet, such as the Crowned Duikerbok, the Capuchin or the Whitetailed Gun. Other animals described by Vosmaer were bought from other collections, most notably the small zoo at the 'Blauw Jan'-tavern in Amsterdam and the collection of Abraham de Klerk from Middelburg, such as the Flying Lemur, the Spider Monkey or the Golden Palm Civet.³⁴

In the first decades of the new scientific interest in natural history, initiated by Buffon and Linnaeus, Vosmaer's series of descriptions were of great importance to the scholarly world. As former editor of

³³ 'Dit verwonderingswaardige schepsel [...] is met een der oostindische schepen, genaamd de Ef-Prins, in het voorgaande jaar 1765, van de Kaap de Goede hoop overgezonden aan Zyne Doorluchtigste Hoogheid den Heere Prinse van oranje en Nassauw, Erfstadhouder enz. enz. enz. deezer Landen. Wy zyn de kennis en bezitting daar van verschuldigd aan den [...] Gouverneur van gemelde Kaap de Goede Hoop, wiens altoos voortduurende beleefde oplettendheden, ter bevordering der algemeende Natuurkunde [...] zo meeninge aangename als wonderbaare voorwerpen, aan de Vorstelyke Verzamelpaatsen der Natuur edelmoediglyk geschonken heeft'. Vosmaer A., *Beschrijving van een een onlangs nieuw ontdekt en nog geheel onbekend soort van Africaansch breedsnuitig varken of Bosch-zwijn; in de afgelegenste deelen van Africa gevangen, en overgebracht in de diergaarde van zyne doorluchtigste hoogheid den heere prinse van Oranje en Nassauw, erfstadhouder, erf-gouverneur, erf-kapitein-generaal en admiraal der Vereenigde Nederlanden, enz.* (Amsterdam, Pieter Meijer: 1766) 7.

³⁴ Tuijn P. – Feen P.J. van der, "On some Eighteenth Century Animal Portraits of interest for Systematic Biology", *Bijdragen tot de Dierkunde* 39 (1969) 69–79.

the posthumous books of Seba, Vosmaer had already established his name. Moreover, with every new description, the status of his employer rose with that of Vosmaer himself.³⁵ A further sign of the importance of the cabinet was the rise of Vosmaer in the political realm. Although personal qualities certainly must have played a role, by the end of the *ancien régime*, when French troops occupied the southern provinces of the Dutch Republic and the princely treasurer Jacob Reigersman was held hostage there, he sought help in The Hague via Vosmaer rather than any of the other members of the court's inner circle.³⁶ Had the cabinet been less prominent, Vosmaer would not have achieved such a central position without having to combine it with another court function.

However, the cabinet was never treated like its French counterparts. Vosmaer lacked a real staff of qualified botanists and zoologists, and was even responsible for the daily maintenance. His quarters, in the building, were very sober. When the stadtholder wanted to have lunch in the gallery of paintings, which was often done for royal guests, Vosmaer personally had to see to it that the high born visitors didn't catch a cold.³⁷ Moreover, the direction of the smaller parts of the cabinet, the library and the antiquities, was in fact also in his hands. Hemsterhuis especially had to leave much of the work to Vosmaer, falling ill often. If he was able to host his collection to visitors, Vosmaer still had to be there, for they regularly wanted to see the cabinet of natural history as well – something for which Vosmaer did not have to ask when it was the other way around.³⁸ His other colleague in the building, the librarian Joncourt, was of some service to Vosmaer, providing him with literature for his publications and seeking out volumes of foreign scientific periodicals for him.³⁹ This again underlines the central position of Vosmaer in the cabinet.

³⁵ By refusing to accept the Linnaean system and adhering to Buffon's, however, Vosmaer placed himself on a side track in the further development of biology.

³⁶ Reigersman to Vosmaer, 4 and 15 March 1793, University Library Leiden, BPL 246.

³⁷ Cf. Heiden Reinestein to Vosmaer, 27 February 1791, University Library Leiden, BPL 246.

³⁸ Cf. F. Hemsterhuis to Vosmaer, 25 May 1789 and undated, University Library Leiden, BPL 246.

³⁹ L. de Joncourt to Vosmaer, 21 September 1766, University Library Leiden, BPL 246.

The Display of a Lack of Power

After William V had fled in a small fisherman's boat, only hours before French revolutionary troops entered The Hague in January 1795, the princely collection was dismantled. Many objects were transported to Paris; others formed the core of new museums erected by the Dutch revolutionary government. The two elephants from the princely zoo were confiscated by the French. Hans and Parkie, as they were called, had been caught on Ceylon by the East India Company in honour of the stadtholder. Now they were marched to Paris as signs of the revolutionary triumph over the former Dutch 'tyrant' William V. By dismantling his zoo and cabinet, the power of the stadtholder was symbolically destroyed.

Theories on the representation of the non-west have solely focused on the representation of other people from non-European parts of the world. Understandable as this may seem, some of the most outstanding presentations of the European colonies in the latter part of the ancient regime consisted for the most part of objects of natural history. If, as is posed in the case of literature and art,⁴⁰ representations of the orient are part of a discourse on the other that permeates the whole of western society, zoological presentations might also reflect this way of seeing the non-European world. The methodological problem here is that the cabinet of William V functioned right before the period that has been the focus of postcolonial theory. Said and many others mark Napoleon's conquest of Egypt as the starting point of their analyses. Especially in the Dutch case colonialism, not even yet imperialism, is a phase in the relationship with the Far East that only begins in the nineteenth century. *Mutatis mutandis* this even holds for England and France. It may be the case that the difference in the artistic representation of the East between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century is reflected in a difference in museological representations. In other words: when literature moved from variations on Scheherazade, *Utopia*, and the *Lettres Persanes* to *Salammô* and *Uncle Tom*, museums (apart from being erected in the first place), may have moved from the Urang utan to tribal masks.

The question then arises whether the presentation of natural history must not be seen as an integral and undistinguished part of the

⁴⁰ Said E.W., *Orientalism* (London: 1980).

collections of coins, antiques and paintings. A more radical interpretation on the other hand might dismiss the representation of the East through natural objects as an illustration of the view of the East as 'natural' rather than 'cultural'.⁴¹ William V's cabinet in this point of view dehumanizes his colonial subjects by placing them in one category with the Urang utan. On an abstract level, a cabinet of natural history at the end of the eighteenth century is part of the dissemination of the enlightened policy of categorization, started by Linnaeus. In naming and categorizing and in performing the role of a public institution William V's cabinet can be described, paraphrasing Foucault, as creating 'a certain type of knowledge of nature, not in terms of repression or law, but of power'.⁴² Power being the name for 'a complex strategic situation in a given society'.⁴³ The situation in late eighteenth century Holland was indeed complex, and the stadtholder's cabinet can serve to show the power play that was going on.

Twenty-first century museums have been described as institutions that 'produce shared meanings, cultural capital reserves, and aestheticized lifestyles that promote social cohesion, economic growth, and political stability'.⁴⁴ This is no less true of the eighteenth century. Museums were then as now part of a greater system of values, serving as instruments of power politics. It is important to note that even after the stadtholdership had been made hereditary in 1748, a royal display of power was unacceptable. The crisis that broke out in the 1780s is a clear sign of the complexity of the situation. The personal advisor and former tutor of William V, the duke of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, was dismissed for having too much influence on the stadtholder. In the debate about the duke's position new arguments arose on the political stage: the regents, delegates from cities and provinces in the Estates, were now seen as the true people's representatives. With the people, or at least the bourgeoisie, being considered the source of sovereignty, the Estates were to be the only advisors to the stadtholder, who was after all not a king, but an executive officer appointed by the Estates.

⁴¹ Hall S., "The Spectacle of the 'Other'" in: Hall S. (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: 1997) 244–245.

⁴² Foucault M., *La volonté de savoir* (Paris: 1976) 121. The original sentence has 'sex' instead of 'nature'.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁴ Luke T.W., *Museum politics. Power Plays at the Exhibition* (Minneapolis: 2002) xxi.

In such a context, the cabinet proved to be an excellent instrument to display the power of the Prince of Orange. It was neither pompous nor political, yet it showed the rationality, modernity and universality of its possessor. In centring on objects of natural history, no direct reference to the domination of people was made – ruling overseas peoples might easily have been taken as metaphorical for a tendency towards despotism at home. Moreover, by associating nature with the stadtholdership, the latter was in fact portrayed as a natural given – as opposed to unnatural, artificial inventions like popular sovereignty. The heart and logic of nature was brought together here, to demonstrate that the heart of power was also to be found with the stadtholder. That is, as has been indicated above, an attempt to change a reality in which that stadtholder was not that powerful at all.

This is not to say that the presentation of nature and the east in the objects brought to The Hague by the ships of the Dutch East India Company reflected an explicit programme. In the way William V and Arnout Vosmaer dealt with the colonies it becomes clear that they both take the non-European world largely for granted. The cabinet was no part of a display of imperial power, for there was not any conception of an empire being ruled. Of all the portraits that were made of William, none features references to colonial power, apart from the two youth portraits that were made of two former slaves and household members from the Antilles – who were portrayed apart, never together with William or Wilhelmine. It did, however, reflect a political programme which sought to strengthen the precarious position of William V. In the display of colonial naturalia the stadtholder merely tried to tip this balance in his favour.

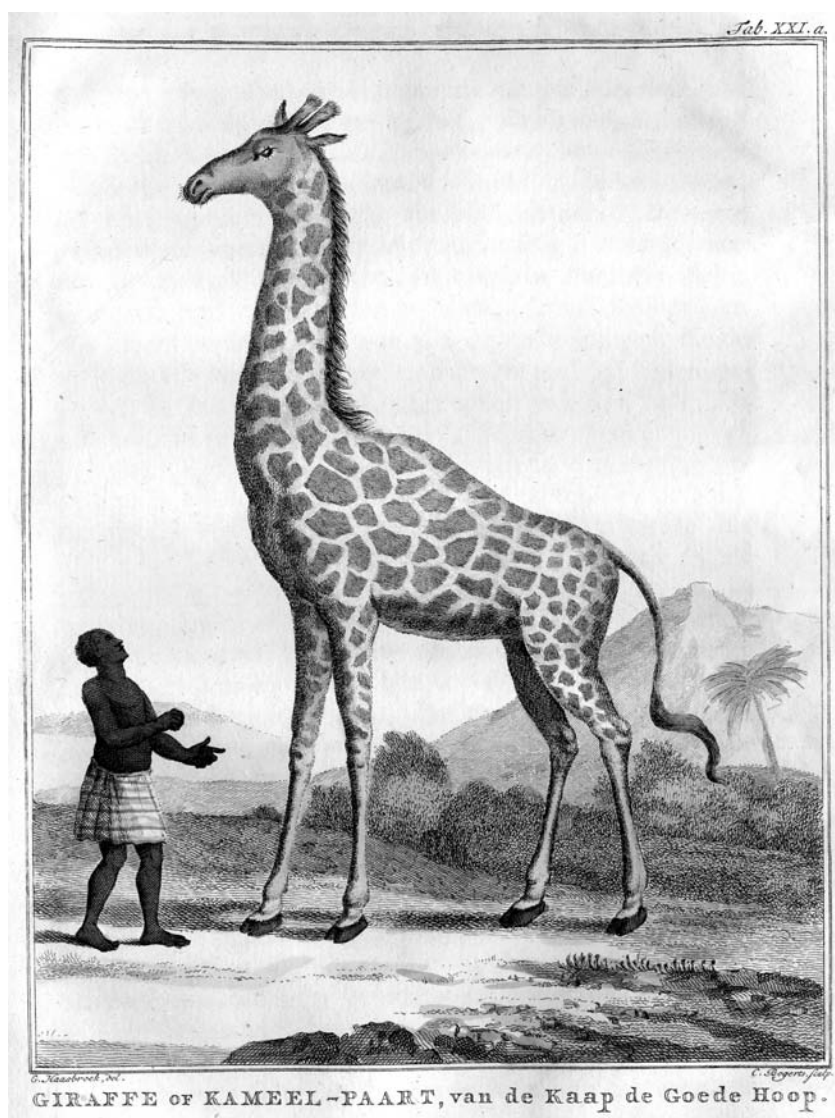


Fig. 1. Anonymous, *Giraffe, of kameel-paart van de Kaap de Goede Hoop*. Hand coloured engraving from A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van het nog weinig bekende, en 't allerhoogste van de viervoetige dieren, die, in de afgeleegene wildernissen van Africa, gevonden worden, en 't welk aan de Kaap de Goede Hoop bekend is, onder den naam van: kameel-paard (camelopardalis) en by oude en latere schrijvers onder dien van giraffe* (Amsterdam, Meijer and Warnars: 1787). Nijmegen, University Library.

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